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NATURE NOTES.

THE SELBORNE SOCIETY'S MAGAZINE

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.,

OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God Who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

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FEEDING THE BIRDS IN WINTER.

NOW that winter is here, those whose custom it is to feed the birds during the long weary months of frost and snow have probably begun their useful work. Perhaps I may be allowed to suggest that occasional notes from those who do this, recording their experiences, and giving lists of the birds which come to their windows, might be interesting to many readers of Nature Notes. There are probably bird-feeding members of the Selborne Society in all parts of the kingdom, and throughout so extensive an area some diversity of species might perhaps be looked for. The physical conditions, too, of any particular neighbourhood would probably have some effect in varying the list. Dwellers in a woodland district might be visited by birds quite unlikely to come to houses situated in a marsh or fen country, or on open heath, and *vice versâ*. No great variety, however, could, I think, be expected, so many birds being too wild to approach houses under any circumstances.

After long-continued frosts, the hard state of the ground makes it impossible for many birds to get at their food, and at such times many, especially the insectivorous ones, are starved to death; while others become so weak that they fall an easy prey to their numerous enemies. The mortality among birds in severe winters is far greater than many people are wont to realise, but the lives of many may be preserved by supplying them with crumbs, seed, scraps from the table, &c. If this is done regularly (say twice a day), and a particular call, whistle, or bell made use of at the time the food is put out, the birds will soon learn to take advantage of the summons, and flock to the feast in gradually increasing numbers. A most pleasing and amusing sight is thus provided for those within doors. Children,

too, can by this means be easily made familiar with and able to distinguish the commoner birds. Most young children being fond of animals, the antics of the tits at their lump of fat, or the successive arrivals of sparrows, robins, chaffinches, &c., are sure to attract and interest them; and, in some cases, the foundation may possibly thus be laid of a life-long interest and delight in Nature.

Though each person probably has his or her own particular method of feeding the birds, it may not be out of place to describe the plan employed here, with little variation, for a great number of years.

A strong rough table is made use of, consisting of two separate parts, viz., a board measuring about 24 by 16 in. forming the top of the table, and a single stout leg or post, pointed and shod with iron at the lower end, and having the top also encased in a sort of ferrule or cylinder of iron, to prevent splitting under the blows of the mallet. This leg is driven firmly into the ground just outside the window. On the under side of the board, in the middle, is a piece of wood some 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick, through which a hole is bored to receive the top of the leg. In order that the top of the table may fit firmly and steadily on to its support, three stout brackets are nailed to the upper end of the latter, just below the ferrule. There is a rim of zinc all round the table, of sufficient width to reach a quarter of an inch or more above its level, so as to prevent crumbs, &c., from being blown away. There is also an arch of strong iron wire (a croquet hoop), from the middle of which hangs by a bit of string a lump of suet or hard fat for the tits. A half-picked bone occasionally substituted makes a welcome change.

A small jar containing seed, such as canary, hemp, millet, rape, linseed, &c., also stands on the table. Oats and small maize, too, are often added. A scraper of thin wood or metal always ready to hand, for scraping off the snow from time to time, we find an absolute necessity. The whole structure is painted a warm olive green, to match as nearly as possible the surrounding evergreens. Besides the table, a box is often placed bottom upwards on the window sill, reaching just high enough to show above the woodwork of the lowest panes of glass. It is rimmed round with zinc in the same manner as the table, and has a small hole in the middle, into which a branch or twig is stuck for the birds to alight on, thus making themselves conspicuous objects to persons inside the room. One of the ends is sharpened to admit of a bit of fat being stuck on it.

Sparrows, I need hardly say, are frequent visitors, and come in troops, clearing off a large proportion of the food: they often seem to gobble up the seed whole, instead of shelling it first, as the chaffinches and most other seed eaters do.

A pair of marsh tits have for three winters been regular customers. From having them almost continually under observation, and noticing all their little ways, I have little doubt it is

the same pair; and most amusing as well as audacious little fellows these tits are, more bold and fearless even than the blue tit. When they see me approaching the place where their seed is kept, they fly on alongside or just in front of me, flitting from bush to bush, or dropping down on the ground close to my feet, uttering from time to time their angry scolding note, as if demanding instant attention to their wants. At other times I find myself waylaid and almost forced to attend to them. Their action in descending to the ground from a tree has a singular resemblance to the fall of a leaf; they seem to be blown to their destination, rather than to fly to it by their own will. On throwing them some hemp seed, of which they are very fond, down drops one of the tiny fairy-like birds, picks up a seed, and is off to some neighbouring bush, when, holding it securely between his toes, he hammers away at it with all his might, to get rid of the outer husk before eating it. He soon returns for another, which he treats in the same manner, often making use of the same twig for this purpose several times in succession.

This pair of marsh tits became so tame that they would come indoors for their seed. The tin in which it was kept happened to be left one morning outside the door, where it was soon discovered by these little birds, who were not slow in helping themselves from it. We then took to putting it on the threshold, to which they made no objection; and then, by gradually moving it further into the room, they were induced to come inside to a distance of some yards from the door, and to do this they had first to pass through a small anteroom. Unlike the great tit and blue tit, this species seems to prefer maize, hemp and some other seeds to fat or meat of any sort.

Though there is often some little quarrelling, bullying and hustling going on at the table, I do not remember ever having seen a tit of any kind guilty of such conduct: with all their spirit and vivacity they are particularly good-tempered birds. This rule, however, like all others, has its occasional exceptions. If two of the smaller tits happen to arrive at the table at the same time, instead of fighting for the possession of the seed jar, one of them cheerfully waits till the other has helped himself. Yet these bold, plucky birds show little fear of others very much larger than themselves, such as blackbirds and thrushes. At the same time, I fancy they have a wholesome respect for their big relative (*Parus major*), though, as far as I am aware, he seldom if ever exercises his reputed murderous propensities in a wild state. The latter, though a gaily-coloured conspicuous bird, is less attractive, I think, than the three smaller short-tailed tits, being more wary and distrustful; but the lovely, comical little blue tit is quite irresistible. It is amusing to watch him pegging away with all his might as he hangs, back downwards, from his bit of suet, casting from time to time rapid glances behind or beneath him, to guard against a surprise. Several broods have been reared here in

boxes nailed to the walls. A pair of cole tits, too, some years ago made their nest in one of these tit boxes, and this summer one of them was occupied by hornets.

In the winter before last a certain hen blackbird for a long time acted as a veritable tyrant to the smaller birds. She would allow no other bird on the table with her, if she could help it, and, as her appetite was a very large one, she spent a good deal of time there. Even when she could eat no longer, she would remain either on the table, or else take up her position on a box tree close by, from which she would make a rush at any small bird which attempted to alight on the table. The little blue and marsh tits, however, were sometimes too quick for her, and would alight, seize a morsel from under her very beak, and be off with it almost before she was aware of their presence.

Greenfinches last winter were frequent visitors, their dull heavy manner and gait contrasting strangely with the sprightly actions of the robins and tits. For some time previously they had frequented some sweet-briar bushes in the garden for the sake of their berries, the seeds of which are a favourite food of this bird, the pulp being rejected. Three or four greenfinches would sit round the seed jar, squabbling among themselves and threatening any other bird which tried to get near it. With their big powerful beaks held half open, they looked so savage and formidable, that most other small birds were wont to keep at a respectful distance.

There are, of course, always a few chaffinches attending at feeding time, and generally more cocks than hens. When seen associating with a company of plebeian sparrows, one cannot help noticing the refined high-bred look of this charming bird, apart from its beautiful colouring; it is, as a horsey man would say, "full of quality." Not only in build, but in gait also, he differs entirely from the house sparrow. On the ground, instead of the upright carriage and jerky hop of that bird, the chaffinch seems to slip or glide easily along with little exertion, and with the body close to the ground. He also keeps one foot always a little in advance of the other, as a horse does in cantering; nor do the legs move, I think, exactly simultaneously, though the action comes nearer perhaps to a hop than a walk or run. Though the plumage of the cock contains no pure or primary colours, yet so pleasingly are the various tints arranged and contrasted, that the result is particularly beautiful; the bar of pure white in the wing, more or less doubled, and crossing the darkest part of the whole plumage, gives a sparkling brilliance to the whole. As the winter wears on, and other signs of approaching spring begin to appear, the colours of the chaffinch wax brighter and brighter, till, at the end of February or the beginning of March, he has attained his full beauty.

And here, perhaps, a word for the hen may be permitted. Though, of course, far less brightly clad than her mate, she is,

nevertheless, a very comely little bird. Compared with a hen sparrow, what a little lady she looks! Graceful in carriage, and gentle in manner, she is in no wise lacking as to beauty of plumage. A few soft quiet tints are so disposed and blended as to produce a most harmonious and pleasing effect, which, as is the case with the male, is much enhanced by the one bit of strong contrast, the white wing-bars on a dark ground. The markings of the shapely little head, too, are very pretty. But, as is the case with the females of many birds, to appreciate their beauty (often of no mean order) they must be seen close at hand. At only a short distance, the various approximate shades of colour, frequently disposed so as to form exquisite and intricate patterns, merge into a uniform dingy grey or brown, often matching so closely the general colour of her accustomed haunts as to afford to the mother bird with eggs or young a most valuable means of concealment.

Last spring, long after the cold weather was gone, and all the rest of the birds had quite left off coming for food, with the exception of the two marsh tits, who still paid us an occasional visit, one particular cock chaffinch still came for his seed. He was so fearless and confiding that he would come upon the doorstep while I stood in the doorway feeding him. He continued his visits even after he had paired, and probably had a nest, and it was pleasing to hear him call his mate to breakfast with a loud "spink, spink." Sometimes she would answer his summons, and appear daintily tripping along the ground, and approaching by a rather circuitous route, never flying direct to the spot. At other times he called in vain, his partner being perhaps occupied with family cares. He always seemed restless and anxious if she did not come.

A brambling appeared on the table once last winter, but was not seen again. A pair of hedge-sparrows frequented the shrubs surrounding the table, but for a long time these gentle, retiring little birds did not venture upon it, but were content to pick up the crumbs underneath, dropped by the other birds. After a time, however, they would occasionally pluck up courage to mount upon it if there were not many other birds about. In a general way the colouring of the hedge-sparrow is not unlike that of the water rail.

The robins almost invariably become very tame in the winter. One of them last year would often alight on the table while the food was being placed upon it. The winter before last we had a pair of nuthatches. Besides the nuts provided for them, they ate bread and hemp seed. I once saw one of them fly off with a large bit of crust to a neighbouring elm, to which they generally took their nuts to crack. He then ran quickly up and down the trunk, as if searching for a suitable cranny to fix it in, and having at last found one apparently to his mind, pushed the crust in and pecked vigorously at it as if it had been a nut. In the spring following, this pair of nuthatches nested in

the hollow trunk of an apple tree in the orchard, which almost every year is used as a nursery by birds of some sort or other. Finding the hole too large, they plastered it up with clay, leaving an entrance hole of rather more than an inch and a-half in diameter. Their work was very firm and solid, and finished with the most workmanlike neatness and exactness. Even the little brown wren, skilful as she is in such matters, could hardly have formed a more perfectly circular entrance.

These notes have run to far greater length than was at first intended, and I will only express the hope that feeding the birds through the winter may become more and more general, and that there may be a corresponding diminution in the hateful and indiscriminate slaughter of our feathered friends.

Wickham Market. G. T. Rope.

AUGUST IN NEW ZEALAND.

ALTHOUGH most of the imported weeds and grasses never cease growing, and many of them flower throughout our short winter of eight or ten weeks, still it is during this month that first a more general awakening may be noticed. In the garden, where during winter on the bare unbudded boughs the kingfishers perched, watching in the rain for homeless, wandering worms, now peach and apricot blossom in shades of pink. In the warm days the English bees are out in hundreds, though the solitary native bee does not emerge from its cell for two months. Several shrubs in the bush provide a vast amount of pollen, and honey may be procured from the small fragrant flowers of the wax-white heath that grows on barren hill-sides and tops. In warm days its low-growing blossoms give forth a delicate scent like laurel leaves crushed.

Towards the end of the month the clematis may be noticed, festooning in white wreaths the tops of the low-growing trees. It always flowers in a conspicuous fashion, as if proud of its virgin beauty. The leaves of the "fern flower" are also above ground on the warmer slopes. Our earliest sundew has acquired this name because it appears in greatest quantity after fires have destroyed the heavy fern growth that covers thousands of acres in the north. Above the clammy insect-trapping leaves a few pink open cup-blossoms hang. They expand in the sun, and close rather early in the afternoons. English daisies are plentiful, and short-stalked golden dandelions lie close on the nibbled grass.

On the fuchsia branches the wax-eyes may be noticed sucking honey from the flowers in all attitudes, circling the boughs or hanging head down, like athletes on a bar. Indeed, a fuchsia tree at this season exhibits a considerable amount of colour. It is everywhere deciduous, and in autumn upon the mountains its

sere and yellow leaf contrasts well with the sombre colouring of the evergreen bush. Though not so magnificent as the better-known South American species, yet *Fuchsia excorticata* is well worth looking into. The flowers pass through various shades of colour. They are at first green, blotched with dull-gleaming purple, then later red. The petals, at first black, become later a bright purple, and in the mid and short styled forms the pollen is of a beautiful mazarine blue. Upon the half-grown leaves I have noticed an insect similar to that which causes the "cuckoo spit" on the may-flower at home. The wax-eye, or blight bird, too, is a handsome little fellow, with bright olive head, yellow throat and rufous flanks, so that in a fuchsia bush there is much movement and colour.

Although the male goldfinches still fly in flocks, several native species of birds have begun to pair. It is interesting to watch the active and bold little sparrow-hawk hunting away intruders from his domains. I have seen him frequently frighten collies from their work. When the lazy, heavy-flying harrier approaches their breeding cliffs, both male and female rush to the attack. They utter a sort of shrill neighing scream, darting down on their enemy, who always turns over on his back, stretching forth his powerful and terrible talons. Wherever and whenever the New Zealand sky is scanned, the latter bird may be seen slowly sailing in circles high in air or hunting low among the fern on broken ground. The birds become lighter in colour and more cautious in temperament as their years increase, and an ancient white hawk is so cautious as to give rise to the Maori proverb, "as wary as an old white hawk."

A few days ago I saw a brace of Paradise duck on the lake. Almost every spring one or two appear. These handsome birds afford a good example of double sexual selection. In the male the head and neck are black, the back pencilled with white, and and abdomen ferruginous, while in the female the neck and head are white. The call notes of the sexes differ also, the drake uttering a prolonged guttural note, while the duck responds with a shrill call which Buller compares to the high note of a clarionet. Of the many species that sham lameness to attract enemies from their nests and young, none do it so perfectly as the Paradise duck. While trouting in Lake Tekapo, in Canterbury, among the mountains, with not a tree for miles and the glittering glacier far above, I have watched the tactics of these birds with admiration. With a wing trailing on the ground, and at intervals dropping as if a leg had given way, they imitate a wounded bird to the life.

Among the reed beds round the lake dwells the fern bird. During other months these shy little birds can be heard rustling, but only in August do they leave even momentarily their thick cover. On several occasions then I have seen the male climbing in quick little runs the dead flower stems of the flax. Towards the end of the month a warbler's nest was brought in to me. It

was taken from among some fallen manuka. This bird is the foster-parent of our two cuckoos, which, however, do not arrive for two months yet. The nest, therefore, must have been built unusually early. It is dome-shaped, with a hole in the side. The material is chiefly roots of grass, thistle-down and wool, warmly lined with pheasant feathers. It is curious to reflect that before the advent of the European, this little bird must have built its nest of entirely different material. There was no grass then of the kind, I find, no wool, no thistle-down and no pheasants.

Space, however, is limited, and this paper on August must close while the fuchsia is not yet fully leafed, and the dwarf heather is still fragrant and white.

Tutira Lake,
Hawkes Bay.

H. GUTHRIE-SMITH.

GOOD LUCK TO IT!*

(*To Mr. Caine and his Bill prohibiting Advertisements in Rural Places.*)

OH, Mr. Caine, for this relief much thanks.
As most benignant benefactor ranks
The man who saves our own sweet countryside—
At once our chiefest glory and our pride—
From all the many nauseating ills
Which come out of advertisements of pills!
Pills there must be, but when we chance to pass
Through meadows and would rest our eyes on grass,
Or pleasantly meander by the river,
We would forget we've even got a liver.
So here's success to you, Sir, in your Bill
To make it wrong to advertise a pill
In rural spots in which we fondly now
Associate "three acres and a cow!"
And when success this rural venture yields,
Do for the beaches what's done for the fields!

Destruction of Wild Plants in America.—Mr. G. G. Graff, of Lewisburgh, Pennsylvania, writes in *Science* for November 3rd, 1893:—"The destruction of wild plants by students of botany and collectors has become appalling. Botany is becoming a universal study in the schools, and one hundred young people, each gathering one plant to use, and ten or twenty to throw away, soon exterminate the rarer plants. The solution of the problem is at hand. Let teachers use only cultivated plants in their work. Of these an abundance can always be had. Turn the attention of students from the mere collection and analysis of plants to the more important subjects of plant physiology and economic botany. The time has come for a change."

* From *Punch*, December 2nd, 1893.

"THE GILBERT WHITE OF THE NORTH."

THIS was the name under which the Archbishop of York referred to the Rev. Francis Orpen Morris, whose death was briefly recorded in NATURE NOTES for March last. We had hoped that some Selbornian who was personally acquainted with Mr. Morris would have sent us some particulars of his life, for he was eminently a Selbornian, and was interested in NATURE NOTES from the date of its institution.

REV. F. O. MORRIS.

But it was not until September that we found in *Good Words* for that month a paper such as we desired, by Mr. E. W. Abram. Permission was at once granted to reproduce, in a summary of this, two of the illustrations which accompanied it, but the pressure on our space has until now rendered it impossible to avail ourselves of the opportunity.

For particulars as to Mr. Morris's descent and earlier life, Mr. Abram's paper must be consulted. He was born near Cork in 1810, but his education and feelings were entirely English.

He was educated at Bromsgrove School—during which time his father's present of a jay laid the foundation of his future collections—and at Worcester College, Oxford; and, after holding various ecclesiastical appointments, was appointed rector of Nunburnholme, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, in 1854—a post which he held until his death, and in which he has been succeeded by his son, the Rev. M. C. F. Morris, of whose *Yorkshire Folktalk*, too long unnoticed, we hope to speak at an early date. By this time he had already become known as a writer on natural history. His *Bible Natural History* had appeared in 1852, *British Butterflies* in 1853, and his *British Birds*, perhaps his most important work, was in progress, having been begun in 1851.

At Nunburnholme he found a congenial resting-place.

"He had lived in other agricultural parishes," says Mr. Abram, "but none of these was like unto this one, where the golden-crested wren, tiniest bird in Britain, could be seen perched upon the topmost festoons of the firs; where the kingfisher darted and dived in the swift brook in the rectory garden, the 'brook without a name' of which Canon Wilton sings in his poems; where the sun shone warm on the lawns, and the winter aconite clothed the turf beneath the beeches in the first saffron of spring, looking at a distance as if some one had come and flung upon the grass a bag of gold."

THE RECTORY, NUNBURNHOLME.

Our illustration shows the rectory, which has been thus described:—

"At the entrance of the valley of Nunburnholme is the rectory, with its cheerful, whitewashed front peeping out from the surrounding trees. The house, like most old country parsonages, bears traces of its successive occupants, in the additions which have been made from time to time to the original fabric; but its variety of style makes it all the more picturesque. In front of it is a pretty garden, with lawn and flowers, and ornamental shrubs, and gravel walks; but the

great charm of the garden is the little brook that runs through it with clear and rapid current, reflecting the green banks and orchard trees, and catching the sunlight here and there in its windings, and crossed in one place by a rustic bridge. Altogether, Nunburnholme Rectory must strike the visitor as the very home of peace and quietness, the chosen scene of learned leisure, or literary labour, or religious contemplation."

Mr. Abram gives a charming sketch of the life led by the "thin, straight-shouldered, white-haired rector." In one sense his was a life of leisure, for his parish was but thinly-populated, and although he always put his clerical duties in the foremost place, they afforded very insufficient occupation for a man of his activity; but his leisure was never unemployed.

"The sun is already fairly high, for the naturalist is none too early a riser, but when up he is alert. His first thought is of the birds. They are in the springtime of their love and their music. The eager gaze of the rector takes a hasty look at the morning; then the door opens and he hurries out, breakfastless and in his shirt-sleeves. 'Dicky! Dicky! Dicky!' his voice calls; not a strong voice, but a sweet one, able to read the psalms and lessons on Sundays in a way one seldom hears now. Instantly there is a tumult, much chattering and screaming. There would appear to be a perfect shower of birds. From out the thick, nest-shading, sheltering yews, down from the strong, many-twigged elms, from the beeches and the birches, the birds come to greet the man who knows them so well, who knows them almost better than they know each other. Cannot he tell the names of those other countries, their winter homes? From the little stand kept for the purpose the feathered friends are fed, while the naturalist speaks a word of welcome to one or other, or of advice, or friendly counsel. The birds look at their big father, turning their heads sideways to do so with many quaint bobs and caprices and pirouettes. Blackcaps, gold and green finches, wrens, perhaps even the rare hawfinch, who sometimes condescends, blackbirds with their yellow bills, thrushes, a whole museum of birds might have come to life and flocked to Nunburnholme. His favourite bird, the chaffinch; his favourite flower, the primrose. And amid all the uproar and morning gossip, it may be scandal, the rector stands watching with a close quick eye for some bird notion he may not have yet noted; still in his shirt-sleeves, breakfastless, and with his great mane of soft silver tossed back from his brow. This pleasure—it was not a duty—he enjoyed, and was able to create for himself almost to the end."

Mr. Morris's books were numerous, but we imagine that his contributions to newspapers and magazines would fill as many more volumes. For the last fifty years, at least, his name has been familiar to readers of the *Times;* and his contributions to natural history magazines and newspapers of all kinds were very numerous. He was a warm supporter of every organisation which had for its object the well-being or protection of animals; and from the first was a member of the Selborne Society. He was, as some of our readers will remember, a warm defender of the sparrow, in whose favour he brought together a mass of evidence; and his little book, called *The Gamekeeper's Museum*, which came into our hands some thirty years since, is an admirable exposure of the mischief wrought by those who destroy the balance of life, and thus injure the creatures they wish to protect.

Mr. Morris remained till his death a firm opponent of the various views and theories grouped together under the term

"Darwinism," and his writings on matters connected therewith showed a certain narrowness and want of appreciation of the position of those who differed from him. He did not sufficiently realise, as it seems to us, that many who held views diametrically opposed to his own were as zealous as he was for the advancement of truth; and the natural and quite justifiable irritation which he displayed in regard to some of the more popular exponents of Darwinism rendered him a little oblivious of the great impetus which Darwin gave to the studies to which Mr. Morris was so devoted. The present Editor of this magazine incurred his displeasure by refusing to allow the re-opening of a closed discussion on matters evolutionary; but his annoyance was short-lived, and he remained a contributor to our pages. The last anecdote from his pen (NATURE NOTES, 1892) was one of a faithful dog; and Mr. Abram records that his life may be said to have ended in loving a dog.

"When the rector lay awaiting the stroke of death, Laddie, a Scots collie, who was in the room, went up to his master and nosed his head into the frail old hand. The naturalist caressed the head of the collie ever so gently, and Laddie kept it lying upon the coverlet, quite still. Then the naturalist closed his eyes and sank into other stillness than this of the dog's."

We may conclude this brief notice with a paragraph from the sympathetic notice published in the *Westminster Gazette*, on the occasion of Mr. Morris's death.

"The motto which Mr. Morris inscribed on the title-page of his splendid work on moths formed the key to his whole life-work. Much as he delighted in studying natural history, he esteemed that science mainly for its living testimony to the existence of an all-wise Creator:—'The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' Many of the sermons which he preached in the little village church were pointed and illustrated by references to facts with which his zoological studies had made him familiar. Neither can it be doubted that his writings have contributed powerfully to the greater interest which is now taken in birds and beasts and insects by educated people generally, and that increased tenderness in their treatment of dumb animals which is being successfully inculcated in children. From his tree-shaded study at Nunburnholme Mr. Morris preached the gospel of kindness to every living creature, to a congregation spread all over the world; and his discourses will long survive the warm heart and active intellect that prompted them."

Some of Mr. Morris's friends have been anxious to establish some memorial of him, and it is proposed that this should take the form of completing the restoration of Nunburnholme Church, a work which was partly carried out by Mr. Morris during his lifetime. For this purpose the sum of at least £350 will be needed. Those wishing to contribute should address the Rev. M. C. F. Morris, Nunburnholme, Hayton, Yorkshire.

HAWKS AND OWLS.

The Hawks and Owls of the United States in their relation to Agriculture. Prepared under the direction of Dr. C. Hart Merriam, ornithologist. By A. K. Fisher, M.D., assistant ornithologist. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893.) 210 pp. 8vo., with twenty-six coloured plates.

This is a bulletin of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and, while giving a concise description of the plumage, range and habits of the birds of prey found in the United States, is principally devoted to a consideration of the food of each species, and their direct and indirect bearing upon agriculture. The statements upon this point are based upon the examination, by scientific experts, of the contents of the stomachs of 2,700 of these birds, and it will be gratifying to the members of the Selborne Society to know that the result proves that hawks and owls, commonly looked upon as enemies to the farmer, "really rank among his best friends, and, with few exceptions, should be preserved." Only six out of seventy-three species and sub-species found in the United States are said to be injurious. Omitting these six, 2,212 stomachs were examined, of which 56 per cent. contained mice and other small mammals, 27 per cent. containcd insects, and only 3½ per cent. poultry or game birds. These figurcs speak for themselves. The book has a greater interest for English readers than might be supposed at first sight, since many North American hawks and owls do not merely belong to the same genera as some of ours, but may be said to be representative forms of them. Thus in division (*b*), "those chiefly beneficial," we find six species of *Buteo*, closely allied to our common buzzard, a barn owl (*Strix pratincola*) wonderfully like ours, a kestrel* (*Falco sparverius*), a long-eared owl (*Asio wilsonianus*), and our own short-eared owl (*Asio accipitrinus*). Of the American kestrel (the so-called "sparrow-hawk") it is said that "although at times . . it attacks small birds and young poultry, these irregularities are so infrequent, compared with its constant good service in destroying insects and mice, that they are hardly to be considered." Grasshoppers and crickets are said to constitute its principal food during the warmer months, while mice predominate during the rest of the year. It is not surprising to find that the barn owl's food is stated to be "almost entirely made up of injurious mammals," and that it is questioned whether it should not be placed among those species which are wholly beneficial. A merlin figures among those whose beneficial and noxious qualities balance one another, while among those few which are stated to be harmful we find the duck hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), the representative of our peregrine falcon, and the sharp-skinned hawk (*Accipiter velox*), which appears to bear a bad character similar to that of its British relation the sparrow-hawk (*Accipiter nisus*), but we learn that in one direction it promises to be of great benefit to the country, viz. in destroying the English sparrow!

The work can be cordially recommended to the readers of NATURE NOTES, not only as a handy guide to the North American birds of prey (the really excellent plates of twenty-six species adding greatly to its usefulness in this way), but also on account of the mass of information therein bearing upon the much-vexed questions of the good and harm done by birds to the farmer.

O. V. APLIN.

[A word may be said in reference to the useful work which the United States Department of Agriculture is performing in the issue of reports such as the one above mentioned. They are valuable contributions to scientific literature, and afford an admirable example of what might be done elsewhere. Our colonial official publications, which are in great measure analogous to these, contrast by no means favourably, either in manner or matter, with the reports issued in Washington. A more recent one deals with the "Death Valley Expedition," and includes a survey of the zoology and part of the botany of parts of California, Nevada, Arizona and Utah. The liberality with which these reports are distributed is another feature well worthy of imitation.—ED. *N. N.*]

* This bird is commonly known in America as the "sparrow-hawk," a most misleading and confusing name for English readers, who are in consequence apt to confuse it with their own sparrow-hawk (*Accipiter nisus*), a bird of very different habits.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

A VERY pretty book on gardening in its various aspects comes to us from across the Atlantic in Mrs. Van Rensselaer's *Art Out-of-Doors* (London, T. Fisher Unwin). It is pleasingly written, and the views advanced are in accordance with good taste, and show a wide acquaintance with very different conditions of cultivation. It is, however, mainly concerned with gardening on a large scale; and although Mrs. Van Rensselaer is anxious that no one should consider that her book might have been aptly called "Every man his own landscape gardener," there seems to be ground for thinking that this title would not have been an inapt one. We note that Mr. William Robinson's views receive some criticism; but there is room for great diversities of taste in gardening matters, although the absence of all taste (which one sometimes encounters) is a thing to be deplored. The book is mainly written for Americans, but its publication in London shows that it may fairly claim a hearing in the old country.

Nature's Wonder-Workers, by Kate R. Lovell (Cassell & Co., 5s.) is not quite a new book, but is one which should find a place in the Selborne library. We have short life-histories, abundantly illustrated, of many of our common insects, as well as of others, not properly insects, which are often popularly included in that category, such as spiders. The headings of the various chapters are somewhat eccentric: "Earth-stars" introduces us to the glow-worms; "Dragons" to the dragon-flies; the cricket figures as "a domestic minstrel"; and "Pandora's box" contains a sketch of the development of butterflies. The illustrations, numerous and full of information as they are, are by no means beautiful; there is a hardness and blackness about them which renders them unattractive, and not such as we expect to find in Messrs. Cassell's books.

Professor Miall's *Object Lessons from Nature*, which we receive from the same publishers, do not fall short in this way; the illustrations, although not all new, being well printed and attractive. These two excellent little books (1s. 6d. each) have already reached a third edition, and well deserve the favour that has been accorded to them. Prof. Miall insists very strongly on the importance of the children for whom these books are intended actually seeing and handling for themselves the various objects described, and he considers pictures, although useful, by no means an efficient substitute for this. If his suggestions were acted upon, we should find the school museum a real aid to education, instead of the congeries of miscellaneous and often quite useless objects which it too often is at present. Selbornians who are willing to work and to put their principles into practice, will find ample opportunities for doing so in connection with the schools of their neighbourhood; they may either get together a collection of objects in illustration of Prof. Miall's books, or may use his lessons in connection with objects already existing. The intelligent teaching which he provides with regard to the principal types of the various branches of natural science is just what is wanted to make our children observant.

Messrs. S. W. Partridge send us the annual volumes of the *Animal World* and the *Band of Mercy*, each of them resplendent in red and gold covers, the former costing 3s., the latter 2s. Beautifully illustrated, and full of interesting matter, one cannot but wish for each an extended circulation, whether in monthly or annual issues. Each, as is generally known, is an organ of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the *Animal World* being intended for adults, and the *Band of Mercy* for children, especially those belonging to the organisation so called, of which we hope to publish an account in our February number, from the pen of Lady Tennyson. We have every sympathy with the objects of the Society, but we are inclined to regret the publication of such narratives as "The Researches of Herr Hardthardt," which appears in the first-named work. Little good, it seems to us, is done by familiarising people with the cruelties which are sometimes perpetrated in the name of science, nor is the impression conveyed of scientific men either fair or just. With this exception, the contents of the volume are admirable, and a great many of the verses, if not of the highest degree of poetic merit, are pleasant, and suitable for learning.

Our correspondent, the Rev. I. E. Page, sends us a pleasant sixpenny book, called *Walks round Alston*—the little Cumberland town of which he is vicar. Mr. Page must be a pleasant companion on a country walk ; he has eyes, and knows how to use them. His little book has several pretty illustrations, but its appearance is entirely spoilt by the fact that the backs of these are used for advertising purposes ! We hope Mr. Richardson Evans will induce our friend to omit this unpleasant feature from his next edition.

The Rev. J. Frewen Moor has brought together, in a neat little volume, the thoughts of various divines and others concerning *The Future State of Animals* (London : Simpkin, 2s.). The absence of an index or a table of contents materially interferes with its usefulness as a book of reference, and there is a want of system in the arrangement which further detracts from its value. We should like to have seen fuller extracts from such earlier writers as St. Augustine, who, if we mistake not, favoured the view, and we could have spared some of the extracts from present-day ecclesiastics in order to make room for the full text of John Wesley's sermon on the subject, which many years ago we transcribed in its entirety. The Rev. W. R. Tate may be added to the number of clergymen supporting the view; a paper from him was published in the *Magazine of the High Wycombe Natural History Society*, for October, 1868.

SELBORNIANA.

A Seasonable Appeal.—The New Year being a time of good resolutions, it may not be inopportune to make a special appeal to Selbornians to resolve to increase their efforts both in furthering the objects of the Selborne Society and in making its existence known to as many as possible. It cannot yet be that our Society embraces every sympathiser with its objects, and until it does there is work for its members to do. If each would determine to obtain at least one new member, not only would our number be doubled, but the outside influence of the Society would be immensely increased. Something more than paying our subscription and reading NATURE NOTES is necessary if we are to decrease the evils which we are banded together to combat ; there must be individual effort, and in direct ratio to this will our Society grow and prosper. Let us recollect that each new member opens up a new sphere of influence with possibilities incalculable, but if it is only the means of saving one flower from destruction, one animal from torture or death, something material has been accomplished.

And there is other work—beyond increasing the number of members—waiting to be done. It is impossible to walk through urban streets or rural lanes without seeing instances of man's abuse of his power over the life beneath him—often thoughtlessly, perhaps ; but it is our duty to remove such an excuse. If the wrong is done through ignorance we can try to throw light in dark places, and, above all, we can do our best to cultivate in ourselves and those with whom we come in contact that kindly feeling towards animals which, if universal, would make the existence of our own and kindred societies unnecessary.

FRED. W. ASHLEY.

What the Children did.—Just before the Christmas holidays in 1892, I went into the day-school here, and giving the boys and girls a short address on birds and their ways, offered two prizes for the best list, compiled from observation, of birds which stay with us in Cumberland through the winter. When the holidays were over, the lists were brought in, and, to my surprise, I found that nearly sixty had joined in the competition. It was a sight to see those papers as the master brought them to me from the children's hands ! Some were written carefully, in clear handwriting ; others in pencil, the paper having been carried in the boys' pockets till the writing was scarcely legible. Some had ransacked books for bird-names, and had put down those of all sorts and countries ; while others only recorded the names of those their own eyes had seen. Among the competitors were fifty-nine boys and seven girls, their ages varying from

six to fifteen. Five only ventured to write descriptions. The highest number of birds on one list was 112; the lowest 11; but it was something for a little boy to have so used his eyes and memory, that he knew eleven birds when he saw them. Some of the writers failed because they gave too much. Such birds as the osprey, mocking bird, and golden eagle were scarcely likely to be found in this neighbourhood in the winter! Several names were new to me—as chitty-ryne, lingy, chivy, siskin, turnstone, knob, scobby yellow youling, snow bird, fieldy, corby, apple-pecker, and shivapple. I found, on asking, that the chivy was my old friend the chaffinch, and that a water-crow was the water ouzel. The heron is called here *heronsafe*.

Alston, Cumberland. I. E. PAGE.

A New Plea for Sea Gulls.—There is a cliff in Waterford Harbour that is much frequented as a breeding place by sea gulls: and which was lately pointed out to me by an old pilot, who said that, to his certain knowledge, these birds had been, under Providence, the means of saving many lives, by preventing a ship from running on the rocks during a fog. One day, he said, in his capacity of pilot, he had charge of a large vessel making for the river's mouth, when a thick fog came on, and he could not see his bearings. Suddenly he heard a great flutter of wings and screaming of sea gulls, which had been frightened from their nests by the near approach of the ship, and thus he knew at once that he must be sailing straight for a shore that would have been certain destruction to the ship, and perhaps to all on board. "And so," said the old man, "the birds saved our lives; as I knew it could only be at *that one spot* where there were so many birds together; and I am sure they have saved many more ships in the same way." If those who so thoughtlessly shoot and destroy these beautiful creatures would realize that they act as a "fog signal" to ships at sea, perhaps they would not be so free with the use of their guns.

Waterford. ISABELLA HORNE.

"Wings" up to Date.—I remember, years ago, hearing a song called "Wings"—rather a favourite, I think, with ladies. Can you kindly inform me whether the subjoined version is correct? I remember that the first line sounded very much like that given below; but I am not at all clear about those that follow. AN ANXIOUS INQUIRER.

Wings, to wear all over,
From each bird that sings!
Wings! I'd like to cover
Every part with wings!

Wings, like bright birds swimming
Round my well-poised hat—
Could you name a trimming
Tastier than that?

Wings to make a border
For my sweet "grebe" muff—
Wings—I've giv'n an order;
Will they send enough?

Wings to edge the flounces
Of my smartest dress—
Wings by pounds, not ounces,
Please me, I confess.

Wings to flash and glitter
Ev'n from top to toe:—
What could there be fitter,
When we'd make a show.

Wings—I'm told, to get them
Many birds are slain;
If it must be, let them!
I don't feel the pain.

A Useful Hint.—A young lady writes—"I am just now seeing a good deal of the Bethnal Green Workhouse children, who have their school in Fowell Buxton's old house. The other day a little blue tit dashed its head against the window and was killed. I took it in for the boys and girls to see. They all begged to have the tiny thing in their hands, and seemed very much interested in the beautiful feathers and markings. If one were clever at talking to them, a great deal might be done to interest these little London-born children, I think."

I think so, too. As much may be done by such simple means, and the use of common opportunities, as by the more ambitious and costly efforts of philanthropy.

THEODORE COMPTON.

Bird Netting.—I enclose cutting from the *Standard* of December 7th, and as this "netting" is now so common, and carried on by so many loafers on Sunday, do you not think that the Selborne Society could protest against this cruel practice? Always on Sunday, whether it be glorious spring or bitter winter, it is the same; and in the summer one cannot go for a walk on Sunday morning without continually passing groups of these men pursuing their cruel occupation. I think that this letter should do something towards bringing the matter under the public notice of our bird lovers.

"Last Sunday, during a walk from Upper Norwood to West Wickham, I counted thirteen sets of men and children, bird netting in each case. One-half had fires, the fuel being collected on the spot. Three sets were in the large field adjoining St. John's Church, Upper Norwood; and of the children two were females. Shooting game is prohibited on Sunday; why should not this abominable slaughter of little useful innocents be likewise dealt with?"

ARTHUR J. ELY.

A paper by Miss Edith Carrington, on "The Extermination of Birds," will be read at a meeting of the Humanitarian League, at 32, Sackville Street, Piccadilly, on Friday, January 12, at 8 p.m. Admission free.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

A Friendly Swallow.—On the morning of the 13th September I was awakened by a noise in my room. On looking up from my bed I saw what I thought first of all to be a bat flying round the room near the ceiling; but as I watched it I discovered it to be a swallow, and at last it settled on a box on my wardrobe. As it flew, I noticed it did not hit the ceiling except with its wings as they rose over its body, hence causing the noise which awoke me. I further noticed it had had a good breakfast, having cleared my room of every species of insect, such as flies, &c. From his perch he seemed to watch me with interest. He then flew a few times round the room and settled on the top of my bed, which has a curtained head; here he sat and watched me. I then drew up the blind, first opening the top of the window and blocking up the bottom, so that he could see the light without fear of dashing himself against the glass. I got on to the bed and gently put my hand near him, in fact, within a few inches, before he moved. He then flew round the room a few times and settled on the top of the bookcase, which nearly reaches the ceiling. He sat on this longways, as a night-jar sits, not crossways, and surveyed the window and me. He seemed to have made up his mind to stop. I, however, thought it kinder to let him go, so put my hand up within three inches of him before he attempted to fly; then he took a swoop and was gone. He was a young bird, not yet having the full length of the tail feathers. The curious part is that he must have come in the night before, as the window was then closed about eight o'clock, and the chimney is blocked up, there thus being no exit or entrance to the room till I opened the window next morning. I went to bed about twelve o'clock, having my gas full up for quite an hour. He seemed to have roosted inside the head of my bed, as his droppings were on my pillow.

Blackheath. J. N. SMITH.

Do Snails Squeak?—Has anyone ever heard a snail squeak? I was doing some rough sort of gardening lately, and, kneeling upon some long grass, took up with a handful of soil and weeds a large black snail, which I thought I heard squeak. I must have squeezed it. I should have thought it fancy had not the same occurred again. The sound was a low but not unmelodious sound, but the strangeness of it made me throw the snail down in some trepidation.

As this is a neighbourhood where cats are destroyed by scores in the cruel gins and traps set in the hedges, we have for some years kept our cats in small kennels placed upon the grass in the field. When the cats are taken in at night, scraps of meat and potatoes and a saucer containing some milk are often left behind. To

these the snails soon find their way. They appear to eat the meat and potatoes, and the large black ones floating about in the milk are apparently dead until touched, when they put out their horns and begin to swim about. This is a strange and wonderful world, but it would, indeed, be strange if a snail has voice!

Delamere, Cheshire. SARAH CASH.

Bullfinches and their Young (NATURE NOTES, 1893, p. 217).—I also should be very glad to know whether bullfinches eat their young? I have had young bullfinches safely reared by their parents in my aviary: but none of the several broods hatched during the last two or three years have reached maturity; when a week or two old they have mysteriously disappeared. I cannot accuse the parents, who seem fond of their young; but will forsake them if interfered with. At one time I suspected my blue tits; but for a year or two I have not kept them through the breeding season, but have let them go. I fear mice must be the culprits.

Costock Rectory. C. S. MILLARD.

A Friend in Need.—Mrs. Eyre Matcham, of Salisbury, sends us the following anecdote which she has lately received from a friend. The incident was witnessed by the person who tells it:—"We were fishing in the river Esk, in Yorkshire, after some hours of heavy rain, and the river was much swollen. A boy of about 14 drove a flock of sheep, headed by a splendid ram, to the river bank opposite. On asking him what he was going to do with the sheep, he said, 'The folks are coming from the farm to wash them, and I'se going to bathe.' We expostulated, and asked the lad if he could swim. He said, 'No; but his brother could.' In a very short time he was in the water, and finding that the current was too strong for him, got alarmed, and called out for 'Billy,' in a distressed tone of voice. The ram immediately jumped into the water and swam to the boy's side, who laid hold of the thick wool, and after being carried by the current some hundred yards down stream the plucky animal landed the boy quite safely, though both were nearly exhausted."

Intelligence of Dogs.—Living in the heart of the Cumberland fells, I am brought into daily contact with farmers and their sheep dogs. The following facts are from first-hand knowledge.

1.—A farmer took some sheep to the fair. The last one was sold singly, to a man from Allendale, eight or nine miles away. The dog followed his master's sheep, and would not be driven back. For days it kept near the house, till a neighbour of its master's coming over, recognised it, and it was brought home.

2. A farmer's dog was left outside the front door of a house where he called. The man left by the back door, and went home. Long after the dog was found at the front, and nothing could induce him to go. At length he was called in. He searched through two or three rooms, and seeing that his master had departed, went quietly home.

3. A farmer who lives some miles from Carlisle, went to market by train. Somehow the dog failed to enter the carriage. It ran after the train for some distance, went back, and waited on the platform till the next train came up, then leaped in and lay down under a seat. Several stoppages were made, but the dog kept still. Carlisle reached, it sprang out, and joined its master in the market.

4. A young farmer took two bulls by rail to Hexham, leaving his dog behind. He posted himself at a place in the lane, half a mile from the house, whence he had a view of the road. He was watched, and observed to run up a hilly field, from which he had a better view. Here he stood gazing for some time, then gave a short yelp, and went home.

Alston, Cumberland. I. E. PAGE.

An Odd Horse Chestnut.—About the middle of October, my attention was called to a large horse-chestnut tree upon Clapham Common, near the parish church, which was putting forth a quantity of new leaf-buds. I have observed it closely since, and estimate that the number of buds has been about one-tenth of that which would represent the ordinary spring produce of the tree. They are almost entirely upon the south and south-east branches. Many of the buds have fully opened, and produced normally-expanded leaves; others

seem arrested in their growth, though showing the usual fresh and vivid green proper to them. Some of the uppermost of the new leaves already hang limp and discoloured, caught by the early frosts. Two informants assured me that the tree had borne flowers shortly before I began to notice it, but I did not myself see these, nor any remains of the spikes upon the branches.

Nov. 11, 1893. WILLIAM WHITWELL.

Squirrel killed by Cat.—At about 7 o'clock one morning, at the beginning of this month (November) Evelyn saw the cat (a tom) run across the yard with a fine squirrel in his mouth. She followed him into the kitchen-garden, and seeing that the poor little thing was alive and struggling, she caught the cat and tried to make him give it up. Finding it was no use she called us to come out; the poor little thing fought hard, scratching the cat on his chest and neck with its fore and hind feet. We tried to choke the cat off, but the squirrel's frantic struggles made it difficult. When at last we got it away, it only gave a few convulsive movements; and as we saw it was past recovery we thought it best to put it out of pain. It was a large specimen, with a fine tail and lovely coat.

Selattyn. C. F. M. BOLDERSTON.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Apprentice.—1. *Setaria viridis.* 2. Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*). The berries are those of some *Pyrus.*

G. H. W.—We have not seen the book you mention.

H. T. O.—We are obliged to confine our notices to books actually sent for review.

E. J. C. (This answer has been unfortunately delayed.)—The plants from Braemar are Marsh Rattle (*Pedicularis palustris*) and Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*).

Corrections.—The following corrections should be made in the December number, the proofs of which were somewhat hurriedly read:—P. 232, line 22 from top, for "for" read "from"; p. 235, line 26 from top, for "gshatful" read "ghastful"; line 5 from bottom, for "Gore" read "Gover"; p. 242, line 3 from bottom, for "working" read "hawking"; p. 243, line 5 from top, for "Rathmore" read "Rathbone," and correct name in index to volume.

The Council of the Selborne Society has decided to reserve the last page of each number of NATURE NOTES for announcements connected with the Society, and over this page the Editor will exercise no control. This still further lessens the space at our disposal, and we shall more than ever have to claim the indulgence of our numerous contributors for the delay which may occur in inserting their communications. We much regret that the continuation of the papers on "Wild Life in Tasmania" has to be held over.

WE must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

THE fund towards clearing off the debt of £70, owing to the hon. treasurer, now amounts to £51 18s. The following members have sent donations between November 14th and December 13th:—Miss Graham, Mrs. Gibbins, Mrs. Gibson, Miss Henty, Miss Forssteen, Miss Hinchcliffe, Miss Hopkins, Miss Ormerod, Miss Nevill, Mrs. Peyton, Miss Ranken, Miss Slingsby, Miss Hitchcock, Miss Marten, Lady Rothschild, Mrs. Sturge, Miss Waring, Mrs. Steer, Lady Robinson, Miss French, Mrs. Wilson, Miss Simpson, Miss A. M. Bullock, Mrs. Corke, Mr. A. J. Hearne, Mrs. Lynn Lynton, Mrs. Wrigley, Miss Hibbert, Miss Nicholl, Mrs. Middlemore, Mrs. Lowther, Mrs. Gibson, Mr. A. H. Macpherson, the Misses Debenham, Mrs. Ormerod, Mr. C. E. Wright, Miss Gardiner, Miss Saunders, Mrs. Carter, and Mr. Pemberton Carter. In addition to the above, several members have increased the amount of their annual subscription.

Members are reminded that the *minimum* subscription of half-a-crown having been found insufficient to defray the expenses of the Society, the following resolution was passed at a special general meeting held on July 17th:—"That the *minimum* subscription, entitling new members to the Magazine, be raised to 5s."

Field Club Meetings.—It has been suggested that it would be desirable that a Committee of representatives of the London Branches should be formed to make arrangements for Field Club Meetings for next season. A preliminary meeting to discuss the matter will be held at 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C., on Wednesday, February 14th, at five o'clock.

New Leaflet. — Mr. Hudson's recent letter to the *Times*, entitled "Feathered Women," which appeared in our November issue, has been reprinted as a leaflet; copies can be obtained from the Secretary on application.

Gilbert White Centenary Memorial.—A sub-committee has been appointed by the Council to consider what steps shall be taken in this matter.

Members changing the addresses to which they wish the magazine sent, should notify the Secretary not later than the 21st of the month.

The next meetings of the Council will be held on January 3rd and February 7th. The Magazine Sub-committee will meet on January 15th.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Birmingham.—At the request of the Committee of the Selborne Society in Birmingham, a free lecture was delivered by Professor Windle, D.Sc., M.D., M.A., in the theatre of the Midland Institute, on November 28th. The lecture was entitled "Nature's Nurslings," being an account of the lives and work of Gilbert White and Charles Waterton, and was illustrated by lime-light slides. Alderman Lawley Parker, President of the Birmingham Branch, was in the chair. The meeting was very successful, the attendance reaching nearly 500.

Croydon.—A lecture was given by Mr. Edward A. Martin, Hon. Secretary of the Croydon Branch, in Seneca Hall, Thornton Heath, on Tuesday, November 14th, on the subject of Gilbert White, with special reference to the Selborne Society. There was a good audience, and as the outcome of the interest roused in the natural history of the neighbourhood, it is proposed to hold a further meeting after Christmas, when objects of interest will be exhibited.

Eastbourne.—Mr. T. Bradfield, of 77, London Road, Eastbourne, whose lecture on Gilbert White was referred to in last month's number, is forming a new branch of the Selborne Society for his neighbourhood in connection with the Eastbourne Natural History Society.

Pinner.—A very pleasant meeting of the Pinner Juvenile Branch of the Selborne Society was held at the Hall, Pinner, by kind invitation of Mrs. Nugent, on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 28th, the Rev. Charles E. Grenside being in the chair. Edward A. Martin, Esq., of Thornton Heath, Croydon, was good enough to attend and deliver his lecture on "Gilbert White of Selborne," which he has specially prepared for the encouragement of the main objects of the parent Society, and the starting of new branches throughout the country. The application of the great naturalist's teaching was made happily intelligible to the juvenile portion of Mr. Martin's audience, and the lecture, which lasted about an hour, was listened to with marked attention throughout.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 50. FEBRUARY, 1894. Vol. V.

A BAND OF MERCY.

I HAVE been asked by the Editor to give an account of the manner in which I started and formed the Tennyson Band of Mercy: and I have undertaken the task, in the hope that my few hints may enable others to form Bands in their own parishes. The necessity of beginning early to train children in the ways of kindness, so that pity and mercy may become a prominent feature in their characters in after life, is so widely acknowledged that it will not be needful for me to enlarge upon it in this paper. Let me, however, say this word of introduction, that unless people are willing to face discouragement and disappointment, and are determined to give up time and thought to their Band, it would be, in my opinion, far better never to approach the subject, as I firmly believe that, with children especially, example is better than precept.

I had not much encouragement shown me in starting my Band, except by a very limited number of friends in the neighbourhood. People did not know what a Band of Mercy meant, nor did they want to know. Was it not something to do with temperance? some asked, not perhaps even waiting to receive my answer; and when my husband inquired of the Bench whether I must take out a licence for holding a "meeting" in a public hall, not one of the magistrates present had ever heard of the Band of Mercy. I merely mention this by the way, as I am anxious to put forward any difficulties with which I may have had to contend, as well as any of the encouraging facts.

My first step was to elicit the sympathy of a lady friend in each of the three parishes—Freshwater, Totland, and Yarmouth —the children of which I wished to join the Band—and with their help I gained the interest of the school-mistresses in the national schools.

We then arranged the meeting before alluded to (this was in April, 1892) which all the children of the three schools were asked to attend, each one paying 1d. entrance fee; and older people were also urged to come and hear an address on the object of the Band of Mercy, they paying rather a larger fee. The proceeds went towards the payment for the hiring of the hall.

Our programme consisted of an address from a lady, who is much interested in the work; some recitations and anecdotes about animals; and some Band of Mercy songs, learnt and sung by the school-children, and the meeting was very well attended. At the close of it I announced that all the children—having now heard what the object of the Band of Mercy was—who wished to become members must meet me at their own particular school at a certain time on the following Saturday, the last day of April, so that we might always look upon our Band as having been formed on May Day. Such little points always please children, and are a great help in keeping up their attention and interest. I also told them that members must bring with them 2d. for the medal, 1d. for the quarter's payment, and ½d. for the magazine, which they must pay on joining—the *Band of Mercy*, which was referred to in the last number of NATURE NOTES.

As was to be expected, a larger number of children joined that day from the excitement of novelty and of wearing a medal than intended to remain members. But sad as it made one to see members drop out of the Band, the money they have brought has done good to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who supplies the medals and magazines, and so has not been wasted. I began by pointing out to the children several simple facts, and I explained as simply as I could what are the duties of a Band of Mercy member, and told them that I would not ask them to make a solemn promise, but merely to say that they would try and keep our few rules. The next thing was to name the Band. I gave out four names, one of them being "Tennyson," as I wished them all to know the great interest my father-in-law took in the work, and his great and tender love for animals. Each child was taken to another room and made to write on a slip of paper the name it wished; and with only, I think, three exceptions in the three schools, "Tennyson" was unanimously chosen. On hearing of this my father-in-law was much pleased. Since then I have held a meeting (or some kind friend has done so for me) at the beginning of each month at each of the three schools, the day being given out at the school three days before, and the children reminded to wear their medals and to bring their halfpennies for the monthly magazines and their pennies as well on quarter-days. At two out of the three schools (Totland and Yarmouth) all the mistresses have become members and attend the meetings, and have shown the most kindly interest in the Band and its work, and I feel that it is to a far greater extent owing to them than to myself that the

success of our Band is due. They talk and listen to the children's little anecdotes, encouraging them in every way that lies in their power, and only the other day one of them said to me, "You cannot think what a help I find it in the school. As for myself, often when I am irritable and vexed with the children I think of the Band of Mercy, and remember that we have to be kind to and help all God's creatures, and that helps *me*. Again, when there is anything neighbourly wants to be done in or out of school, and it is the duty of no one especially to do it, I have only to say, 'Is there any member of the Band of Mercy here who would like to do a kind act?' and always some child comes forward."

At these monthly meetings I give the children a short address, mentioning any cruelty or kindness that may have happened in the neighbourhood, and give out a short text, such as "Be merciful," "Be pitiful," "Be strong," &c., and explain it in a practical form for the members to think of during the month. Then I tell them one or two anecdotes about animals, which they greatly enjoy, and often members recite a poem or read a story (always about kindness), and, if well done, the reciter or reader is clapped by us all. Then the magazines are handed out. Each child, on its name being called out, comes to the table and takes a magazine, and receives three good marks if it has medal and money, but a O, which takes away one good mark if either is missing, or a X if the child is absent, excepting for a really good reason. We then sing a Band of Mercy hymn or song, and finish with the Band of Mercy prayer. In "the protection of God's creatures" we include human beings, birds, beasts and flowers, as all having been created by God for our use, care, or pleasure. This makes the Band of Mercy an every-day help to children in hundreds of ways.

May being the month when our Band was started, we had our Band of Mercy treat (which we hope to have annually) in the same month. Our Yarmouth children had to come by train, and the railway company kindly allowed me return tickets at single fares for them. The Freshwater and Totland children joined them at Freshwater station, and all the members (children and teachers) formed into a procession, the two prize winners heading their own schools with a banner. Every member had been told to bring a nosegay of either garden or wild flowers, but had also been warned against taking them from neighbours' gardens, which I fear is sometimes done on such occasions. Our artillery volunteer band, which had lately been formed, had been engaged to meet the children and lead the procession and play during the treat, which was held in one of our home meadows. On arriving at the meadow, the children sang one of our songs, and then brought up their nosegays to be packed in two hampers, which were at once sent off to London—one to the very poor Camberwell Band, the other to a Band in the East End. This part of the programme was an enormous pleasure to our chil-

dren, and I received pathetic letters of gratitude from these fellow London members. We then seated the children in rows on the grass (it being very dry), and gave them their tea. Then games and races were the order, after which a kind neighbour sent up three large animal-shaped balloons, to the intense excitement and delight of the children and our guests. The treat ended by the children forming in line and the Rector of Freshwater addressing them, and lastly, by the prizes (the winners having been chosen by vote at the May meetings) being given by my little three-year-old son, who joined as heartily as anyone present in the delights of the day.

Every Band may make its own Rules, and ought to be self-supporting (except as regards payments for the treats). After clearing all yearly expenses, I was able to send £1 from the Tennyson Band of Mercy, as a contribution towards the salary of the Island Inspector for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The following Rules I have found very useful and sufficient :—

RULES FOR TENNYSON BAND OF MERCY.

Subscriptions.—Badges, 2d. Magazine, ½d. a month. Subscription, 1d. quarterly, from ages 7 to 16 ; above that age, 3d. quarterly. Honorary Members, 2s. 6d. annually.

Badges to be worn by all Members at any meeting or gathering of the Band.

Payments to be made punctually at the beginning of the month, at one of the schools, on a date given out three days before. Any child not present, except in case of illness, or not paying punctually, will have a bad mark against its name. If two quarters are not paid, the name will be crossed off the register.

Prizes.—No child with a bad mark is eligible for a prize. A prize will be given in each school to a boy and a girl, and the recipient will be chosen by vote, in the school, from the six boys and girls who have most good marks.

Special Rules.

No Member to take or touch a Nest or Eggs.

No Butterflies to be touched or caught.

No Animal, Bird, Fish, or Insect to be caught or killed, except for food, and in self-defence.

No Stones to be thrown at Children or Animals.

No Slides to be made on the ice where any traffic passes.

No Flowers to be touched in other people's gardens or grounds, nor gathered ruthlessly to be thrown away.

No Kicking, poking, thrashing, or jerking of the mouth of, any animal driven.

Any Member known to have broken any of these Rules will have a bad mark in the Register.

Magazines, medals, and excellent little pamphlets, especially one entitled, "How to treat Animals and Birds," by Miss Marriott, may be procured at the Central Office of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Jermyn Street, London.

AUDREY TENNYSON.

A FLORIDA TORTOISE.

THERE have been so many references to tortoises lately in these pages, that a few words about one of mine will not be out of place. It is very large, measuring 15 in. long by 12 in. broad and 21 in. round. We brought it home with us from Florida in a case of palmettoes and other plants last July. Out there they are called "gophers," are very plentiful and most destructive, cutting down and eating all succulent plants and young vegetables, and making deep burrows, like rabbit holes, all over the forest and gardens. Consequently, they have a bad time of it in their native land, and are always destroyed when found—generally chopped open for the fowls. Dogs devour them greedily, and will hunt them as they would game; seldom, however, managing to hurt them, but always turning them on their backs, in which position they are quite helpless.

The very morning we left Florida, my gopher was captured in the "squash patch" by a coloured man, and put in a box to await execution at a more convenient season. There I found it, and at the last moment popped it into a packing case of plants which was then in the act of being screwed up for the journey. We often talked of it while crossing, wondered if it would reach England alive, and rather reproached ourselves when we thought of it far down in the hold. We were much delighted on reaching home to find the gopher very well and lively, so much so that he refused to stay in the garden, and had to have his address painted on his back in order that he might be returned when found (as he often was) walking through the village or down the lanes. About a month after our return the tortoise surpassed all we had ever expected of it, and laid eight eggs; three in our own garden, the rest in a neighbour's field. They were rather large, with very hard, chalky shells; quite round, and on being blown were found to contain an oily yolk and white. As soon as ever there was even a suspicion of cold weather, the gopher made a burrow beneath a rubbish heap, where I conclude it intends to spend the winter. The said burrow has a large entrance, and on warmer days, or if the sun be at all powerful, it appears at the mouth of the hole, retiring out of sight as the afternoon grows chilly. So far it has seemed to eat nothing but grass, which it does very awkwardly. Whether it will survive an English winter remains yet to be seen.

W. M. E. FOWLER.

Squirrel killed by Cat (p. 19).—In India, where the gray squirrels run about the verandahs of the houses, and often enter the rooms as the doors and windows are left open, it is not at all an unusual sight to see the cat carrying off a squirrel which it has captured.

D. W. LAUGHTON, Major-General

WILD LIFE IN TASMANIA.

VI.

IT may readily be imagined that in a timbered country like this, there are several descriptions of what is technically known as "bush." For example, there is the "green bush," the grand old primeval forest, standing in all its silent majesty as it has stood thousands of years. This description of bush, when rooted in good soil, is often fairly easy to travel in when one gets a little used to it, for, although there is plenty of timber, it is nearly all large, and one does not encounter the masses of small sticks which so frequently encumber the poorer soils. Then there is the "bush" which arises after a fire has devastated the country, and this is the worst of all to travel in; the big timber which has been destroyed by the fire is replaced by an army of seedlings, which rapidly develop into saplings, and these so close together that nothing short of hacking one's way with axe and slash-hook is of any avail to the explorer. The thistles and fireweed (the latter belonging to the groundsel family) are always the first plants to show up after a fire, and this will occur miles away in the bush, quite distant from any other plants of the kind. However, as the seeds are winged, and will fly a long distance before a good breeze, this may be accounted for; it is not so easy to explain the fact that the seedling trees above referred to are often quite different to the trees that were growing there before the fire. The dogwood is one of the scrubs which arise in this way, often appearing in poor soil after a fire has passed over it and the original scrub has been scorched out of existence.

The most open bush of all is on the plains, where the trees are much more scattered than in the good land, and of a more gnarled and stunted appearance, though often of a great size even here. The larger timber consists chiefly of peppermint gums, and the undergrowth of honeysuckle trees, he-oaks, gum saplings, small ti-tree, and various species of heath and rushes. The "green bush," the virgin forest as yet unmarred by the touch of man, is a land of beauty and delight such as can hardly be conceived. Scarcely ten minutes' walk from the knoll on which our little cabin is perched, is a glade of lovely tree-ferns, where, seated on the trunk of some fallen tree, and shaded from the fierce rays of the sun by the long drooping fronds of the giant ferns, we may look into the face of Nature as we never could in a more civilised country. The ground beneath our feet is mossy and littered with dead leaves and twigs, and the log upon which we are seated has also a thick covering of green moss.

The very trunks of the tree-ferns themselves are a study, for upon them is growing quite an assortment of delicate little mosses and ferns, which hang from the brown fibrous stem like hair from the back of some monstrous bear. For our fronded

beauties are not all straight up and down; some run almost horizontally after the first few feet from the ground, and we may, if we please, scramble along one so inclined and take a seat in the feathery crown. And, by the way, there is something to notice about this same crown. If we search carefully among the dead leaves and golden hair which protect the bases of the fronds, we shall find some creatures very much resembling the fresh water shrimp of the old country. They wriggle along sideways with great vigour, and soon bury themselves again in their moist retreat, but whether they pass their whole lives there in the fern tops, or at some period descend and live in the water, is a point which awaits solution.

Leaving the elevated perch where we have been examining the small crustaceans, we arrive on *terra firma* and have not gone many yards before we notice a rather large speckled bird fly silently from a tree and begin to run about quickly among the dead leaves and over the logs. We recognise it as the bush thrush, and from its quick, excited manner, although it utters never a note, we make a shrewd guess that the nest is not far off. We examine the dog-wood tree out of which the bird flew, and discover that it forks at about eight feet from the ground, thence growing upwards as two trees. A stout piece of timber lies close by, and this we jam at an angle against the tree, and having by this means scrambled up high enough to get a peep into the fork, we find it occupied by a large, beautifully round nest, made chiefly of fibres from the stem of the old-man fern and moss. On the soft bottom of this comfortable habitation repose two rather large eggs, blotched all over with dull red. The character of this bird agrees well with its surroundings. Living in these majestic wilds, scarcely ever approaching the habitations of man, he goes about the duties of life in dignified silence, he vouchsafes no song to cheer his mate during the lonely hours of incubation, and she, in her turn, meets him with no feminine chatter when he comes laden with spoil from the bush. All our forest dwellers, though, have not this glorious attribute of silence, or whence these rasping, whining sounds which salute our ears? To the waving head of yon graceful palm fern, erect and slim as the tree whose name it bears, we trace the disturbance. There, sporting amid the drooping fronds, we discern a family of the fire-tailed finch, father, mother, and three or four young ones, from which latter proceed the peculiar noises, something like the rapid winding of a large watch, which first attracted our attention. How exquisitely beautiful, although so quiet in tone, are the markings on these same finches. The small, soft, grey and greenish feathers closely scored with dark wavy lines, while just above the tail is the one patch of bright colour from which the bird derives its name. They rapidly become familiar if taken young, and make pretty pets, going through as many amusing gambols as kittens. We wonder if their abode can be very far off, and casting our eyes here and

there, they eventually rest on the top of a prickly mimosa in which there is apparently a bundle of hay, and after some examination we can make out (for the tree is but a small one) that it is shaped like a Florence oil flask—a big bulb at one end and a long neck-like tunnel at the other. Towards this queer construction our little group make after they have frolicked sufficiently, and pop one after another into the woven grass tunnel which protects their home.

Here, clinging to the stem of an old-man fern, is a large brown mis-shapen looking insect, which at first sight puzzles us. We take it in our hands and perceive that it is but a case very perfect, but empty, and along the back a slit from which the imprisoned one has escaped. It is the nymph-case of the cicada or "locust," as he is universally called here among the bush-folk, a fine insect over two inches across the outstretched wings, which are beautifully veined and dotted. He sings away merrily through the long summer days, sitting upon the gum trees or upon bits of scrub, and when disturbed launches himself upon the air with a sort of click and seeks a fresh resting-place, there to recommence his never-ending soliloquy. A different life, truly, he is living now, in the free air and bright sunshine, amid the scent of the countless wild flowers, to that passed in the preliminary stages, when he grovelled beneath the soil as the bloated, repulsive-looking creature whose presentiment lies upon our hand! But a breeze of the evening moves, and strange murmurings are heard in the tree tops, murmurings so like human voices that we can scarcely believe we are not within hail of a goodly company of our fellow-creatures. Perhaps the nymphs and dryads, the beautiful old-world spirits who melted away as cities grew and men multiplied, yet linger amid the sublime scenery of these primeval forests, where Nature wears the aspect she has worn for thousands of years. Who knows?

A wallaby, startled from his lair, crashes away among the undergrowth as we walk quickly homewards, while from a hole high up in yonder giant gum, a family of ring-tailed 'possums come gliding down for their nocturnal gambols.

H. S. Dove.

Table Cape, Tasmania.

A Curious Nest.—The finding of a curious nest at Beanacre, near Melksham, was noticed a few weeks ago in a Bristol paper. While removing a large stone, 7 feet long by 4 feet wide, which had not been touched for upwards of forty years, a gentleman found, under the centre, a curious nest composed of very fine dry grass, the structure being thicker at one end than at the other, and occupying a space 12 inches by 6 inches. There was a small hole in it about 1¼ inches in diameter. Inside were 243 very large acorns. The nearest oak tree is 500 yards away, and the little tenant would have to cross a railway to get to it. It is thought to be the home of a dormouse. Under other parts of the stone there were acorns which had germinated, thus showing that the place must have been occupied some time.

Robert F. McConnell.

UNEXPECTED TRAITS IN BIRDS.

I DO not know if others have observed the same thing, but I think I see in my pet canary traits of no end of other birds. The last trait of this kind I noticed was the following: He is very fond of the smaller green peas, and is often permitted to have one as a treat, and recently he has discovered the nicest way to deal with them. If he attempts to peck them on a flat surface they are apt, from the shininess of the outside skin which he does not eat, and wishes to break through, to roll away from him, and it may be fall into holes from which he cannot retrace them himself, so now he carries them to his cage. There is hung on the side of it a piece of what is called "cuttle fish" on which to whet his beak. The string, which is run through the centre of this "cuttle fish" to hang it by, has worn a small round half-cup-like hole; into this hole the pea is dropped, and then is eaten with complete ease and comfort. In this, my canary reminds me of the nut-hatch, placing the nut to be broken in the crevice of a tree, so that it cannot roll away as he pecks at it.

Then he often reminds me of the parrot kind in this, that he will, with the nicest art, fix on the perch with his claw any green stuff, a bit of chickweed or groundsel, which he has carried up, and thus will manage to eat it comfortably and without sullying it with the sand &c., in the bottom of his cage. He is like a jackdaw or magpie in the love he has for carrying up into his cage not only bits of thread and string, but anything shiny, as a small morsel of tinfoil, such as that taken off Lambert and Butler's bird's-eye tobacco, and keeping them in a corner of the cage when cleared out; and when that business is in hand he seems to be particularly anxious about the fate of his collections.

I was once rather laughed at in print, even by a friend of my own, for saying that I discovered some trace of humour in a canary I had, which was so tame that it would leap on the shoulder, and, if not taken notice of, would pull one single hair, and make me start. At this the tiny thing would then fly off *tweet-tweeting* and flirting his tail, and looking back to see what impression he had made. The writer said that he believed in humour in the more highly developed animals, such as dogs and cats, but not in a canary; but he forgot that some of our most decided animal humourists, such as starlings, magpies, and jackdaws, belong to the bird tribe. I believe that all who have kept pet canaries, which are free to fly about the room, could tell of such traits being developed in their favourites; and I entirely agree with a good authority, who wrote in December, 1891, in one of the ablest articles on bird life I have ever read, the following sentences:

"It is a little hard on birds to bracket them with the

lower animals generally. Considering its size, a sparrow has a very highly developed nervous system. Birds have never been given credit for the amount of brains which they really possess. Because they do not know how to fetch and carry like dogs, or play with each other's tails like monkeys, or run round after a piece of string like a cat, they are voted slow of comprehension. The fact is that we know less of birds than of any other creatures. They often live quite close to us, they may spend all their days in a cage within a yard of our arm-chairs, and yet they and we are almost complete strangers. Still within its feathered breast there is a history unexpressed, and mankind has not yet learned enough of bird language to comprehend the meaning of chirps, and trills, and warbles."

The text of this article was the sight—the memorable sight—observed by Mr. Andrew Crosse, the distinguised naturalist, of two robins' playing a game alternately of shamming dead, the one being dragged round by the other:

"They had not been trained to play this game by any showman's devices, but they had out of the pure fun and merriment of their own hearts, and the liveliness of their bird intellects, evolved a game of 'Let's pretend,' like 'Alice in Wonderland,' and carried it out with perfect success. It seems almost impossible to suppose that any creatures could get up a performance of this kind without first communicating their intentions to each other by means of sounds. . . . The Quantock Hills story shows decisively that we have not at all got to the bottom of bird character so far. If a pair of ordinary robin red-breasts are capable of having a deliberate 'lark' of the kind described, we shall have to begin to revise our somewhat superficial estimates of bird intelligence."

I should be glad if any one who has observed similar traits to those I have mentioned in caged birds, would kindly describe them.

Thinking of these facts, I threw down the following sonnet:—

JOY AND REASON IN BEAST AND BIRD.

"Man, know thyself!" the ancient sage averred,—
Search out thy thought and analyse it clear,
And fail not to make record of thy fear,
Source of emotions that thy heart have stirred.

And give me place to tell of beast and bird,
Lest thou believe that only in thy ear,
Does music sound or reasoning appear,
And that to thee alone is given the Word.

Nay: to the nightingale his song is sweet;
The lark that rises upward from the dew
Is joyful o'er the song: the wrens repeat
Their raptures to each other: ever new
The signs that lead them on their courses fleet;
And reason reigns in plans they oft pursue.

ALEXANDER H. JAPP

THE PARK ON THE NORTHERN HEIGHTS.

A DULL mist—not a yellow fog, for we have been spared such hitherto this winter—overhangs the side of the hills along which, north and south, stretches Alexandra Park. Save the oaks, whose brown and withered foliage still clings tightly to the branches, all the trees are bare of their leaves. Gone, too, are the summer flowers, woundwort and yarrow, ragwort and clover, birds-foot trefoil and the rank umbellifers, and in their place are left nothing but withered and whitened bents, which quiver lightly in the chill breeze. The now dull greensward does little to lighten the prevailing tints of brown; but amid the oaks and elms a few Scotch firs, with their dark foliage, boldly relieve the greyness of the scene.

Standing aloft on one of the lower spurs of the hill, the gloomy and deserted palace, which gives its name to the park, shares in the generally sombre aspect of its surroundings. But there is this difference between comely nature and ill-directed art, that, while in a few short months we may hope to see the lawns and groves of the park clothed again in their spring verdure, the palace must remain gloomy and deserted still.

Dreary in appearance, the palace has a drearier history. Opened with a flourish of trumpets and drums some twenty years since, it commenced its inauspicious history by being burnt down three weeks after the opening. Rebuilt though it was, fortune still frowned upon it; its numerous shows and exhibitions were scantily patronised by the holiday-making public. Its fair surroundings alone brought it the little popularity it at any time had, and it is now what it ever was—a false jewel in a golden setting; the only remaining source of profit being the trotting matches that are annually run over the race-course in the park. The Alexandra Palace Company for a long time since have yearly attempted, though not yet with success, to obtain parliamentary powers to dispose of the greater part of the park for building purposes. It will be in the recollection of the minds of most of our readers that from two to three years ago energetic attempts were made to set on foot a scheme for effectually saving this open space, one of the noblest on the Northern Heights, from such a disaster. Had it by now been successful, the necessity for writing these lines would not be forthcoming; but the scheme for saving the park has never advanced beyond a certain point, and for some months past little or nothing has been heard of it. The deadlock, we believe, has been principally due to the refusal of the London and Middlesex County Councils to act together in the matter of purchase, the former declining to sanction the sum of £175,000 proposed by the latter as a reasonable one to be paid. It need hardly be said that the enemy—for we can consider the Palace Company in no other light—will not be slow to take advantage

of the quarrel, and unless a speedy agreement be come to, Alexandra Park will ere long be such in name only, and another be added to the host of mocking phantoms of "parks," "groves," and "gardens," with which the metropolis abounds.

The question as to what use should be made of the palace—in the event of the park becoming, as it ought, public property—was largely discussed at one time. We venture to hint, if the idea be not altogether wild and chimerical, that if no good use can be made of it, its demolition and sale of the materials, notwithstanding the considerable expenses attendant in bringing this about, would effect some return for the purchase money paid down for the whole estate. Its disappearance would be no loss whatever to the landscape. Vast and ungainly, it must ever remain such till it crumbles into ruin. But the park, which is nature's work, is imperishable if left alone; and will increase in beauty year by year. Therefore, though it be at a great cost, let nature have her due.

ARCHIBALD CLARKE.

FURTHER NOTES ON LONDON BIRDS.

THE following notes bring my former contributions on London birds up to date, *i.e.*, to the end of 1893. The kingfisher, seen on November 18, 1892, has already been noticed (*N.N.*, 1893, p. 38).

During the frost, at the beginning of January, 1893, there were hundreds of gulls flying over the Thames between Blackfriars and Westminster, and several were seen over the Serpentine. They almost all belonged to the black-headed species—*Larus ridibundus*. Even when people were skating on the Serpentine, some wood-pigeons were "cooing" overhead, and by January 21, I saw them indulging in their spring flight, in which they rise almost perpendicularly by a few sharp strokes of the wings, which clash over their heads, and then sail down with their wings outspread and motionless. Hedge-sparrows were singing in Hyde Park on the 19th, and by the 22nd the thrushes were almost in full song. I saw a flock of lapwings on March 4, flying over Kensington Gardens at a great height.

By far the most interesting event of the year was the return of the rooks to the gardens, where quite a large colony established itself by the broad walk, near Kensington Palace, and built no less than fifteen nests. The birds, which formed the colony in Connaught Square, had apparently given up all intention of nesting there, until March 11, when they suddenly appeared, and set to work building and repairing the old nests as hard as they could. Early in April there were eight nests, of which six were apparently inhabited. There were two rooks' nests in the tree in Albion Street.

The crows in Kensington Gardens deserted the spot where they had nested for several years, between the Serpentine and the round pond, but they had a nest on the east side of the water, near the avenue.

A good many summer migrants came to London during April. Large numbers of willow-wrens appeared in Kensington Gardens on the 16th. My sister heard a cuckoo on the 25th, and during the latter half of the month I saw a good many swallows. Before breakfast on the morning of the 30th, I went out to search for new arrivals, and heard some reed warblers in the shrubbery on the south side of the bridge over the Long Water, and on the next day I heard a bird of the same species on the island in the Serpentine.

On the afternoon of April 30, I saw a cock bullfinch near the flower walk. This bird appeared to be an ordinary bullfinch, and not a specimen of the large brightly-coloured race, a pair of which took up their abode in the same district a few years ago, but which seem to have disappeared.

May was an uneventful month. I saw a goldfinch in Hyde Park on the 2nd; a sedge warbler was singing on the morning of the 16th on the island, and stayed there for several days. Spotted fly-catchers arrived on the 5th, and a good many of these birds nested as usual in Kensington Gardens; there were certainly four pairs, and I rather think six.

On July 2, a reed warbler was singing in a lilac bush within six feet of the Bayswater Road; and on the 5th I heard, probably, the same bird in some osiers which have been recently planted at the north end of the water in Kensington Gardens. Whether any of these birds nested I cannot say.

A tree-creeper was seen on August 1 in Kensington Gardens, and a grey wagtail on October 2, and a greenfinch on the 11th in Hyde Park, where the former is rare, though it occurs not uncommonly in winter in Regent's Park.

During the autumn, gulls came to town in considerable numbers whenever the weather was cold or boisterous, and the arrival of a number of them on the water of St. James' Park was mentioned in a letter to the *Times*, by Mr. Digby Pigott, on November 13. I went to look at these birds shortly afterwards; the majority had left, but those I saw all appeared to be of the black-headed species.

A. Holte Macpherson.

Early Appearance of Pale Tussock Moth.—To-day I have had shown to me a living specimen, lately emerged, of the pale tussock (*Orgyia pudibunda*). The caterpillar (known as the hop-dog) was found in the summer, and it entered into the chrysalis state about the usual time. I find it has been kept in a warm room, but even this seems scarcely sufficient to account for its appearance in January, instead of in May or June. Another specimen has emerged from a chrysalis belonging to one of my own children, and this was kept in a cooler place (although indoors) than the other. Both specimens are females.

Malvern Link. Richard F. Towndrow.

OUR REPTILES.*

With the exception of the addition of a chapter (pp. 86, 90) on "Amphibia, or Batrachians," almost entirely made up of a quotation from Professor Quatrefages, and the alteration of the title from "Our Reptiles," to "Our Reptiles and Batrachians," this little book is simply a reprint (with all errors included) of the original edition of 1865. The author says in his preface, "In making such additions as were necessary to bring this little volume up to date, I have discovered that very little was necessary beyond a more definite recognition of the differences which subsist between the true reptiles and the batrachians." Very little, indeed, it would seem! The only "addition" to be found in the work is the following statement in the account of the leathery turtle (*Sphargis coriacea*) on p. 184:—"A specimen, eight feet long, was caught in a herring net at Bridlington Quay, on October 15th, 1871." Every other statement, quotation, and note of occurrence of any species is reprinted verbatim, and refers to the years previous to 1865. The absurdity of speaking of "the *tortoises* indigenous to Great Britain" is perpetuated on the title-page; and the author himself says in his preface to the re-issue, "I have permitted the chapter on Gray's banded newt to remain, and also the plate, although under the impression that the species has been introduced into the British list by error."

The account of *Zootoca vivipara* is particularly meagre and incorrect. Nothing could be more inaccurate than Dr. Cooke's description of its manner of feeding on p. 25: "In an instant it darts upon an insect coming within its range, which as speedily disappears down its throat." In reality, the fly is shaken so that it may be swallowed head foremost, and then chewed most deliberately, after which the little reptile licks its mouth, as a cat does after eating.

The natterjack (*Bufo calamita*) we learn on p. 131 was still found at *Deptford* in 1893! *It never was found there.* I have by me a letter written by the late Mr. Edward Newman, dated April 6th, 1869, in which he states, "As I go through the species [of British reptiles, on which he was then writing a series of articles in the *Zoologist*] I cannot help being struck with the small amount of real practical knowledge that authors possess. Thus Bell speaks of the natterjack as abundant at Deptford, simply because I sent him a large supply *when I lived at Deptford.*" Thus errors are repeated from one author or compiler to another *ad infinitum.* As to the natterjack being found at Deptford in 1893, Dr. Cooke might as well have informed his readers that it is abundant in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross, because specimens are usually on sale by the dealers in birds and small live stock in Great St. Andrew's Street close by. On p. 133 we read, "In the eastern counties, where we are told that this species [the natterjack] is sufficiently common to be recognised by the country people as distinct, it is called the 'walking toad.'" This is a mistake. In those localities in East Anglia where it is found, the natterjack is the "*running* toad," so called to distinguish it from *Bufo vulgaris*, which they call the "walking toad." Country people do not usually name the animals with which they are familiar on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, as Dr. Cooke appears to suppose.

The most interesting chapter in the book is that on the viper or adder, where are reprinted many startling narratives by persons of credit as to the female viper receiving her young into her throat in case of danger. It is a great pity this question has not been cleared up during the twenty-eight years which have intervened since the publication of the first issue. There seems to be little doubt entertained of it among observant people living where adders abound. I was told many years since, by a very intelligent labourer in West Surrey, that on such occasions the dam utters a peculiar hiss, evidently a note of warning—as is the peculiar cluck of the hen when she calls her chickens under her wing—at hearing which the young reptiles rush up to their mother and disappear down her open throat. He had himself witnessed the occurrence on one occasion.

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* *Our Reptiles and Batrachians:* a plain and easy account of the Lizards, Snakes, Newts, Toads, Frogs, and Tortoises indigenous to Great Britain, by M. C. Cooke, M.A., LL.D. New and revised edition, 8vo, pp. xii., 200; 11 coloured plates. W. H. Allen and Co. Price 6s.

In conclusion, I may say that the lithographed figures of the reptiles—which are the same that were used for the first edition—are very good, except that the green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*) is badly coloured in my copy—it should be a bright grass-green, as in my copy of the first issue; and that the slow-worm depicted is from a dead specimen, and therefore lacks the vigour of the others. It would have been useful to have depicted each sex of a species, when the difference between male and female is marked; as in the common lizard, the slow-worm, and the great newt. In the first of these, the belly of the male is bright red with black spots, while that of the female is light olive without spots. The male is also much thicker than the female, and his tail shorter. In the slow-worm the tail of the male is much blunter than that of his mate, and not more than half the length. The male warty newt (*Triton cristatus*) is black on the back, while the female is greenish. None of these differences in the appearance of the sexes are noted by Dr. Cooke.

W. R. Tate.

WEATHER LORE.*

This handsome and attractive volume is the second edition of a book by the same author which appeared in 1869—a fact which does not appear on the title-page. We may say of it at once that it is a storehouse of information of all kinds, scientific, popular, fanciful and legendary, connected with the weather—a subject which is certainly not wanting in variety; moreover it is excellently indexed and well arranged, and must be considered as the standard book on the subject. At the same time, as the author contemplates a future edition, we venture to call his attention to one or two points.

So much care has been expended on the book that it is to be regretted that so many references are wanting or insufficient. For instance, on the very first page we read: "In the reign of Henry VIII., a proclamation was made against the almanacks which transmitted the belief in saints ruling the weather." Very likely it was, but could not some reference have been added which would save the necessity of hunting through the proclamations of the whole reign in case we want to verify the reference? Again, in the same page we have:—

> "Whether the weather be fine or wet,
> Always water when you set—"

but Mr. Inwards gives us no means of tracing this distich. Instances of this incompleteness, often numerous, are to be found on nearly every page. Other references are incomplete; many, indeed, may be verified by a reference to the bibliography at the end of the book, but to refer to "Folk-Lore Journal," without adding volume or date, reminds one of the airy way in which "Augustine" and other ecclesiastical writers are quoted by popular theologians.

We are not quite clear whether the flowering of plants and the arrival of birds are in place in a volume of Weather Lore, but if so, they should certainly be given on better authority than Hone's *Every Day Book* and Forster's *Perennial Calendar*. The naturalist will demur to the placing of spiders among "insects," and he will want to know the authority for other statements—*e.g.*, that "roses are said to begin to fade" on St. Mary Magdalene's Day (July 22nd), or that "if robins are seen near houses it is a sign of rain."

Mr. Inwards will find weather-lore not included in his book in Aubrey's *Remaines of Judaisme and Gentilisme*, published by the Folk-Lore Society. There is probably even yet a good deal to be collected regarding the traditional times for planting certain seeds, Henry VIII.'s proclamation against almanacks notwithstanding. Here is a North Bucks rhyme (Newport Pagnell) which we have not met with in print:—

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* *Weather Lore:* a Collection of Proverbs, Sayings and Rules concerning the Weather, compiled and arranged by Richard Inwards, F.R.S.I. London: Elliot Stock. 8vo, pp. xii., 190. Price 7s. 6d.

"Saint David and Chad,*
It's time to set beans if the weather's ever so bad:
If they're not in by Benedick†
They had better stop in the rick."

Mr. Swainson, in his *Handbook of Weather Folk-lore*, a charming little volume which appeared in 1873, has similar proverbs for peas:—

"David and Chad,
Sow peas, good or bad."

and

"Saint Benedick,
Sow thy peas or keep them in the rick,"

but we do not find peas in Mr. Inward's index. He has, however, as has been said, given us an excellent book, and no better is likely to be forthcoming until it reaches a third edition.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

One of the prettiest sixpenny books we have ever seen is the Rev. Dr. Jessopp's *Pity the Poor Birds* (S.P.C.K.), and the author's name is a guarantee that matter is well matched with manner in this dainty little volume. There are only two chapters, one on "Starvation," and a shorter one on "Extermination," but they sum up "the whole duty of man," and, especially the second, of woman, with regard to our feathered friends. It is a book to distribute widely, not only as a school or class prize, or to Bands of Mercy, but in the drawing-room and the boudoir, to a place in which its elegant appearance fully entitles it. Here are its concluding words:—"The time has come when the cry should be raised without hesitation, 'Let there be no wearing of feathers of any sort or kind. Each and all shall be Nehushtan to us; they are abomination; we have worshipped these symbols of savagedom too long.' Let but that cry go forth from you, my sisters, and surely you will not miss your reward. From hedgerow and copse and woodland, gladder carols will greet you, and a fuller sense of thankfulness will be yours

'When the sweet birds that sang for pity
Jubilee for joy.'"

Mr. Warde Fowler has given, in a shilling pamphlet (B. H. Blackwell, Oxford), a delightful sketch of his search for *The Marsh Warbler in Oxfordshire and Switzerland*. Only a scholar and a naturalist could write such a paper, which was read last November before the Oxfordshire Natural History Society; and Mr. Warde Fowler's claims to each of these titles need no demonstration. The marsh warbler has only of late years been fully recognised as a British bird, and no such careful study of its life and habits has hitherto been penned. The author has aimed "at giving those who have not yet met with the bird, a better chance of discovering it than they would gain from even the best handbooks," and his success can hardly be doubted.

"Of the making of *verse* there is no end." It is not a year ago since we noticed a volume by the Rev. M. S. C. Rickards, and still less since we quoted from Dr. Japp's *Circle of the Year*, and now we have a new volume from each of them! We cannot help saying, with all deference, that the fluency of verse-writers seems to us to militate against the permanence of their works, and the time-honoured criticism that "the author would have done better had he taken more pains," rises to our lips. Yet so Selbornian a writer as the author of "Songs of the Birds," merits in Nature Notes the sympathetic treatment which he metes out to his subjects; for example, here are the lines to the swallow:—

* March 1 and 2. † March 21.

"How sweet to me when round the cottage eaves
Are heard thy twitterings in the mornings clear,
When all around are stirrings in the leaves
And distant notes of many birds I hear.
But thou art nearest, and thy song is sweet:
Image of faith and constancy complete:
Thou, with thy mate, returnest year by year,
With grateful message both to see and hear."

Dr. Japp has many more like this in his *Dramatic Sketches, &c.* (Chatto), and we are sorry not to find space for the verses on "Sparrows Wintering." But the printer is inexorable!

Mr. Rickards's *Lyrics and Elegiacs* (Bell & Sons) are so like his *Lyrical Studies* (see NATURE NOTES, 1893, p. 89) that they almost seem continuations of the earlier work. The robin, blackbird, ringdove, and sandpiper, and the thistle, the earliest snowdrop, and the latest primrose, are among his subjects; and we find ourselves much in sympathy with "A Naturalist's Grievance," against the builder and the defacer of our woodland scenes.

Mr. Elliot Stock sends us *The Book of the Heavenly Birthdays*, by our valued correspondent "E. V. B."—a volume so beautifully printed, so quaintly illustrated, and so daintily clothed as to demand a "gilt top," the absence of which is its only imperfection. The contents are an admirably chosen selection of beautiful and tender verses about death—death as a friend, or as the "sister" whom the Saint of Assisi was wont to greet; and the "heavenly birthdays" are to remind us of those who, as Rossetti has it, "are just born, being dead." It is a sweet and solemn, but not in the least a sad, book; and we shall be surprised if it do not prove a comfort to many, as it assuredly will be a delight to others.

SELBORNIANA.

Birds at a Window.—In accordance with Mr. G. T. Rope's suggestion (p. 1), I send a list of birds which come to be fed at our window. It is not a long or a varied list, but when I explain that the window in question is one at the back of a row of houses on the outskirts of the town, enclosed by walls on two sides, with a steep strip of garden on the third side, and possibilities of cats innumerable, it will be seen that the conditions are not the most favourable for attracting many birds, especially timid ones. Beyond the gardens it is fairly open, villas and their gardens being the chief features. By placing a shelf of wood across the window box, and fixing a twiggy branch in a flower pot, very fair accommodation is obtained. On the twigs are hung half-picked bones and lumps of fat; to these, two great tits, three tom tits, and three cole tits pay constant attention. Very seldom more than two come at once; the others keep watch upon a cotoneaster on one of the walks, which serves as a convenient shelter in times of alarm, as well as a coign of vantage. The crumbs on the board quickly disappear under the combined efforts of two young cock chaffinches, a robin, a thrush, a hen blackbird, a host of sparrows, and occasionally a starling or two. It is curious that the blackbirds and thrushes, which often are in the garden, are so shy of coming to the window. A greenfinch and a wren have come to the cotoneaster, but never further. Two years ago a nuthatch came to this same window several times, but I have never seen him since. Do tits consume all they carry away, or do they hide some of it?

Bath. CATHERINE PEDDER.

A Plea for Sea-Gulls (p. 16).—Every one who is an observer of bird life in Northumberland must have been grieved to see the reckless destruction and slaughter of gulls and terns carried on at St. Mary's Island, on the north-east coast. This is reached at low tide by a stretch of sand lying between the banks on the shore and the island, which is, perhaps, about 150 yards long from the

shore to the island. This piece of land is occupied by men, on all favourable occasions, who build up huts composed of stones, seaweed, sticks and other *débris*, for the express purpose of concealment from the birds. Here they sit until the tide compels them to shift, or darkness sets in, waiting for any birds they can get—chiefly gulls, terns, and the commoner of waders, such as dunlins, purple and common sandpipers, redshanks, oyster catchers, godwits, and various other visitors and residents. The destruction and reckless slaughter of the gulls and terns is terrible. There are sometimes two or three, or perhaps more, pleasure boats drifting about, with from two to half-a-dozen men, pointing at anything they have within shot, from a seal down to a little auk. They always secure good bags in the way of quantity, and sometimes a rarity.

Leazer Park, Newcastle-on-Tyne. HENRY INNES.

Cage Birds (pp. 173, 215, 240).—I cannot think that the great joy and interest which cage-birds afford is to be denied us on the ground of cruelty. How many there are who would hardly ever see a bird if it were not in their possession as a cage bird. All our domestic animals live an unnatural life, and are deprived of their freedom; and we cannot give them credit for realising what their life might be if released from their artificial existence. Happily for the lower animal creation, they have not the power of looking back upon the past, or into the future. They exist, and with constant attention to their varied wants, different foods, daily exercise outside their prisons (or homes ?), society of their own kind, sunshine and air, their life is happy, and ought to be healthful. Of course delicate birds, difficult to keep in health and on artificial food, should be left in freedom; and the same may be said of larks, for how essentially their wings are made for almost constant flight. One of the strongest objections to bird buying is the fact that out of the hundreds of birds annually caught, such numbers die, often within a few days of their capture, owing to the carelessness of the hawking bird catchers. If each owner of some of God's animate creations would look upon them as His, and as watched over by Him, I think all would be done to make their life the happiest; and in turn they would lead our thoughts to greater reverence and adoration to the Giver of all good things.

Roslyn, Hampstead, N.W. ETHEL G. WOODD.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Fight between Rat and Snake.—One afternoon in the summer, when I was staying with my sister at her country house in Somerset, I was strolling round by the pigstyes, and observing a disturbance on the top of a dung heap, paused to see what was going on. Here were a rat and a large green snake engaged in deadly conflict. I watched them for some time. The heap was close to a rotten wall, and several times the rat retreated into the wall, to come forth again and resume the combat. On being disturbed by some one coming into the yard, the rat ran in, not to come out again. I then killed the snake, and found it had been badly bitten about the head. My theory about the cause of the fight is that the rat had a nest of young inside the wall, and the snake had intruded too near. Perhaps some of your correspondents can tell of similar experiences, and help to an explanation of this, to me, novel sight. The snake was a female, full of ova, and over three feet long.

W. N. DAUBENY.

Tomtits and Butter.—In the warm weather we enjoyed at the beginning of this winter, our supply of butter was frequently placed in a covered dish on an outside window ledge. On one occasion the cover was loosely placed on the dish, and was either blown off by the wind, or helped off by the efforts of the tomtits to get at the protected butter. However this was, they managed to drag off the muslin in which the butter was wrapped, and many deep "digs" and holes testified to their enjoyment. We have for many years hung out bones or pieces of fat on bars outside the windows in winter time, and it has been a great amusement to watch the various tits at work on them. St. Leonard's for a town, probably because the Sussex woods come near it and because it is well supplied with public

gardens, is wonderfully full of bird life. Jackdaws, titmice (three kinds), blackbirds, thrushes, chaffinches, robins, linnets, and, of course, sparrows, abound in gardens within a few minutes' walk of the sea front and the parade. For the last two summers, two pairs of wild doves have frequented the Archery Gardens near this house. It is curious to see how a little effort in the way of feeding birds will soon attract many varieties which otherwise would have escaped notice.

The Mount, St. Leonard's-on-Sea. H. J. GRAHAM.

Starlings Chasing a Hawk.—As I was taking a walk on December 9, I saw a flock of starlings chase a hawk for a considerable distance. The hawk, evidently not enjoying the attack, made good its escape. Can any one inform me whether this is a rare occurrence?

Rogate, Sussex. F. ARNOLD.

Stoat and Birds.—A stoat, or weasel, having ventured near the house, a large number of sparrows which were feeding there surrounded it, and drove it from shelter to shelter until it managed to reach a rough bank round a fir tree.

Weybridge. STRATHMORE.

Blackbirds, Thrushes, and Crumbs (NATURE NOTES, 1893, p. 224).—According to your contributor, "Miss Yonge mentions the fact that in hard winters blackbirds and thrushes do not care for crumbs." I find, on the contrary, that they are always eager for dry crumbs or small crusts in hard winters, and come for them to the windows like robins.

Buscot Rectory, Lechlade. OSWALD BIRCHALL.

Birds' Beaks.—Is there any disease which destroys the beaks of birds, or is it an accident? We have had a blackbird and a robin without beaks.

F. C. M.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. T. B.—Your question is somewhat too comprehensive; please say which work you want, and we will supply the information.

F. J. L.—"The Gamekeeper's Museum" was a shilling volume, but we do not know who published it.

C. R., S. B., and others.—Kindly note our 5th rule (see below).

M.—Birds will sometimes strip some holly trees, and leave others untouched. We are not aware that the reason for their selection has been ascertained.

Erratum.—The Rev. I. E. Page informs us that he is not the "vicar" of Alston (see p. 15), but its resident Wesleyan minister.

The Council of the Selborne Society has decided to reserve the last page of each number of NATURE NOTES for announcements connected with the Society, and over this page the Editor will exercise no control. This still further lessens the space at our disposal, and we shall more than ever have to claim the indulgence of our numerous contributors for the delay which may occur in inserting their communications.

WE MUST REQUEST THOSE WHO FAVOUR US WITH THEIR COMMUNICATIONS TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

THE fund towards clearing off the debt of £70 owing to the hon. treasurer now amounts to £64 17s. The following members have sent donations between December 14 and January 15:—Mrs. E. Cornish Bowden, Miss E. K. Gamwell, Mrs. Knott, Mrs. Dixon (a donation from the Birmingham Branch), Mr. E. D. J. Wilson, Miss A. Fry (a further donation from North Somerset Branch), Mrs. Payne, Dr. A. J. Powell, Miss de Winton, Mrs. Hubbard, Miss M. T. Watson, Miss Whiting, Miss E. J. Corke, Mrs. Edward Drummond, Mrs. Eames, Mrs. H. Thompson, Miss M. Hope, Mrs. Davidson, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. J. V. Eden, Mr. E. Swain, Mrs. Lowther, Miss Hawes, Miss S. P. Hawes, Mrs. Macbraire, "A Friend," Lady Dorothy Nevill, Miss Mackenzie, Mrs. Horsley, Mrs. Hawkesley, Miss Coles, and Miss de Montmorency. In addition to the above, several members have increased the amount of their annual subscription.

Members are reminded that the *minimum* subscription of half-a-crown having been found insufficient to defray the expenses of the Society, the following resolution was passed at a special general meeting held on July 17, 1893:—"That the *minimum* subscription, entitling new members to the Magazine, be raised to 5s."

Field Club Meetings.—Members are reminded that a preliminary meeting, to discuss this subject, will be held at 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C., on Wednesday, February 14. The time has been altered to 6.30 p.m.

Leaflets.—Mr. Hudson's letter, "Feathered Women," can still be obtained, gratis, from the Secretary. Professor Tomlinson's "Appeal to Ladies" can be obtained from Miss A. Fry (hon. secretary, North Somerset Branch), Failand House, near Bristol; or Miss A. Martelli (hon. secretary, Northern Heights Branch), 6, Prince Arthur Road, Hampstead, N.W. Price 4d. a dozen, or 2s. 6d. a hundred, post free.

Ferns and Wild Flowers.—The Council desire to call the attention of members to the practice which obtains of purchasing ferns or primrose and other wild flower roots from hawkers, who strip the banks of country lanes in order to fill their baskets with the spoil. Complaints have reached the Council that the practice is prevalent not only in the neighbourhood of London, but also over many parts of Devonshire and Cornwall, and in other counties. They would urge strongly upon members the necessity for abstaining from purchasing from, or otherwise encouraging, these men, if they would wish to save whole districts, especially those near large towns, from being completely denuded of the choicer kinds of ferns and flowering plants.

Members changing the addresses to which they wish the magazine sent, should notify the Secretary not later than the 21st of the month.

The next meetings of the Council will be held on February 7 and March 7. The Magazine Committee will meet on February 14 at 5.30.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Bath—We regret to announce the death of Mr. W. G. Wheatcroft, hon. sec. of the Bath Branch. He was chiefly instrumental in the formation of this branch, which was one of the first established.

ANNUAL PAYMENTS FROM BRANCHES.

Birmingham	£3	14	9
Ferns, Co. Wexford	0	10	6
Northern Heights	2	7	0
North Somerset	1	0	0
Nottingham	0	13	0
Rape of Lewes	0	18	4

Communications for this page, which should not exceed fifty words, should be forwarded to the Secretary of the Magazine Committee, 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.

Nature Notes:
The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 51. MARCH, 1894. Vol. V.

HOW TO PROTECT BIRDS.

AS the season for bird-nesting and egg-stealing approaches, Selbornians may be glad to have presented to them a few practical suggestions. If these can be put in such a way as to bear upon the children, rich and poor, with whom we are brought in contact, they may tend to the protection of our native birds. We must look at the motives that lead young people to persecute birds and destroy their eggs if we would arrive at the best means of restraining them.

I would classify their motives thus—first, wanton mischief; secondly, ignorance; thirdly, the collecting mania. The two first mostly influence the poor, and the last the richer classes. I will endeavour to suggest remedies for each.

Mischievous country lads may be in some measure restrained by bills posted freely about in their village stating clearly the penalties for taking nests and eggs, with a list also of protected birds. These notices should be couched in plain words that children can clearly understand, and not after the style of a warning-board which was intended to protect a spring of pure water for village use, the wording of which ran thus: — "Persons are requested to refrain from polluting or contaminating this water." I am afraid the rustic "Tommy" was not much enlightened by these formidable terms. Any proved case of pure mischief or cruelty shown towards any living creature should be made a serious offence, rebuked openly in the village schools, and spoken about to the parents by the clergy and others; in this way public opinion may, by degrees, be created, and any child so offending may learn that he or she is in disfavour for such acts.

It may be that only a few children out of a whole school have a disposition which delights in cruelty, but all are more or less ignorant and thoughtless, and need careful patient teaching

in the duty of kindness to all living creatures. What constantly happens is this. A boy sees something unusual flitting about in a tree; he wonders what it is, and, wishing to learn, he naturally flings a stone at the object; when the coveted thing lies gasping at his feet, he looks at it a moment and flings it aside. He knows nothing about the harm he has done; he has no idea that he has killed a bird that perhaps very rarely visits our shores, and that may not be seen again for years.

Why, then, if we wish such visitants to increase, do we not systematically teach our boys and girls to watch and study the ways of wild creatures, and feel some rational interest in them, so that in consequence they may be drawn to do what they can to aid in their preservation?

If some competent person in each country village would but gather the children together as often as possible and talk to them pleasantly and kindly about the life-history of one bird after another, giving details of its mode of life, its usefulness in destroying insects, its nesting-habits, the tender love between the mated birds, and their care of their young, defending them even at the risk of their own lives if needful, surely the impressible hearts of children might be led to pity and protect our feathered friends.

Leaflets on natural history and kindness to animals and birds can be obtained very cheaply from the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Society for the Protection of Birds, and the "Dicky-bird" Society, and these should be scattered broadcast throughout our land, and cannot fail to do beneficent work. If coloured prints of our common birds were hung up in village schools, and simple explanatory lessons were given upon them, it would surely be more useful to young rustics than that they should know the exact difference between the Indian and African elephant! Yet one often sees large pictures of foreign animals in schools, and not often anything so simple as prints of the creatures the children meet with in every-day life.

Again, small prizes might be offered for the best papers on our English birds, and all the items about them that can be obtained.

Not long since I was delighted to receive from a dear unknown child a capital drawing of a brambling which I could recognise at once, so truthful was the pose and colouring; and though the young artist was only eleven, his drawing and letter revealed a born naturalist. Now this kind of effort might be largely promoted amongst young people with excellent effect. We should make the rule I have myself observed all my life most carefully, "never to have a bird killed wantonly, even for drawing or study purposes."

There are admirable lithographs to be obtained of all our English birds, and these, with an occasional find of a dead bird, and the glimpses we may obtain of them in life, will furnish enough to guide quite young artists in their first attempts.

Let us suppose a national school awakened to this kind of

competition, and a tea given to those who have sent in papers. I can see the way to a delightful evening when the papers should be read, comments kindly offered, mistakes corrected, information given, and some fresh subject set for the next time. The whole village would be full of chat about this gathering; each child would naturally bring much of the knowledge gained into his own home, and thus parents would indirectly be enlightened on natural history subjects on which they are usually deplorably ignorant.

These humble suggestions are offered as being the best means I can at present bring forward in order to attain the end we have in view, and they apply equally to young people in a higher position in life, but I earnestly hope that far better plans may be evoked from others as a result of bringing the subject prominently forward.

I would conclude with an excellent idea borrowed from Miss Carrington's valuable paper just published on "The Extermination of Birds," and that is that our young people should be encouraged to model birds' eggs in wax, and colour them exactly according to nature.

It seems hardly possible to prevent boys making collections of birds' eggs, and since they will do it, we can but guide them to a humane method of carrying on the study of oology.

Even the one egg used as a model need only be borrowed from a nest and returned when the model is coloured. The collection would be a permanent one, and formed absolutely without robbing the valuable birds, without whose incessant labours we should have endless insect plagues. For the *modus operandi* of this last idea I would refer my readers to Miss Carrington's little book.*

In trying to discourage the collecting mania, I know I am treading on delicate ground, and must define my meaning clearly, or I may convey wrong ideas and provoke a needless correspondence. I do not think very young children should be allowed to kill any living creature in order to make a collection —it must tend to make them hard-hearted; far better is it surely to teach them to watch and admire every bird and insect they come across. As they are thus taught to know the ways and habits of living things, and year by year they grow up with kindly feelings towards them, I think they will hardly be likely to develop into the heartless beings who can destroy perhaps fifty lovely butterflies in order to complete a circle of colour in some case of insects. *That* is the kind of collecting I wholly condemn as both senseless and cruel. So much study can be carried out without taking life that it seems undesirable to take up in early days any line of investigation which involves the death of the things studied, at any rate until the student is old

* "The Extermination of Birds," by Edith Carrington. Published by William Reeves, 185, Fleet Street. Price 2d.

enough to avoid any possible cruelty in the matter. It appears to me that if we bring up young people with a reverent love for all, even the lowliest of God's handiworks, that feeling will tend to restrain them from exercising the instinct of destruction, which we can so often trace in children's early years.

The indiscriminate slaughter of innocent life that is carried on year by year fills me with distress, and I for one shall never cease to protest against it by voice and pen. I can but hope that by the multiplication of our Selborne branches and kindred societies we may in time see some diminution in this cruel warfare against all creatures in fur and feathers.

ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.

LEAF-SHAPES AND MOISTURE.

IN a very short time spring will be with us again. Already the tiny buds on the trees and shrubs have begun to swell, and in some cases have burst from the dingy coats which shielded them from the icy winds and frosts of winter. In a few weeks the sombre brown of the woodlands will give place to the tender green of the early year, with fresh inducements to us to wander through the glades and mossy pathways. At such a time as this it is seasonable to ask you to open your eyes as you pass along the woody paths and notice how varied are the shapes assumed by the leaves of the trees above, and of the herbage at your feet. It is exaggerating very little to say that every variety of form and structure assumed by the foliage of the different plants, serves some definite purpose in the life of the herb or tree in which it occurs. It is well to inquire what the conditions are which surround each plant in its native home, and from a knowledge of these to attempt to explain the meaning of the shapes and structures which occur in its organs.

A great German botanist—Stahl—has done this in one important respect with leaves. Java happened to become his home for a time; and whilst there, one of the things which struck him most was the extreme humidity of the atmosphere. He very naturally applied this to his favourite subjects, the plants, and asked himself what effect this condition might have upon their structure. A little observation and reflection showed him, how harmful it is to the leaves, and indeed to the whole plant, if rain, or other moisture, be allowed to remain standing on them for any length of time.

In the first place, its slow evaporation greatly interferes with that which should go on from the interior of the plant through the numerous pores in the leaf surface. Then, again, it rots the tissues of the leaf, as may be seen in many greenhouses, where

there is a continual drip; you will notice many leaves have brown spots caused by the standing of water upon them. Another evil arising from this cause, especially in those countries where the sun shines powerfully between the showers, is that the drops of moisture act as so many burning-glasses, burning holes and brown spots in the leaf on which they rest. Drops or spheres of water are magnifying and burning-glasses. The little penny magnifying glasses hawked about the streets are simply spheres of water; and we sometimes read of fires which have originated through a globular water-bottle acting as a burning-glass when the sun shone upon it.

Seeing, then, how hurtful it is to have the leaf surface covered continually with moisture, and yet that the foliage of Java remained unharmed, Stahl came to the very obvious conclusion that there was some adaptation in the form or structure of the leaf which prevented this evil from affecting it. With this conviction in his mind he set to work to study the foliage of the Java forests, and what he tells us of this is equally true of the leaves of every other country in which rain and moisture have to be battled with. I will not attempt to set down here all the learned arguments and conclusions with which Stahl's work is filled; it is my object simply to ask you to notice what modifications of the leaf to enable it to cast off the water you can observe in our English plants, and I will state here some few cases of adaptation which may serve as guides in your own observations.

If you walk round the garden shortly after sunset you will notice, if you look carefully, that many of the plants have their leaves arranged in a different direction from that which they occupied during the day. Examine, for instance, the bean plants; during the day their leaflets were spread out horizontally so as to catch as many rays of sunlight as possible; now in the evening they all droop in an almost vertical position. These movements of leaves after dusk are known as "sleep-movements," and occur in a great number of plants. Evidently the change from the horizontal to the vertical position must tend to throw off any water which may have collected on the surfaces during the day, and it also prevents the dew, which is so frequently formed in the cool of the night, from settling on them. Very similar to this is the sensitive plant of warmer climes, which, at the first drop of rain, folds up its tender leaflets, and thus prevents any further wetting.

The formation of waxy layers is another adaptation which runs the moisture off like water from a duck's back. Compare with this the fruits covered by their delicate "bloom," which is nothing more than a waxy film which serves the same end as in the leaf. Hairs also, which cover the surfaces of so many leaves, perform the same duty in another way. They act like blotting paper, spreading out the round drops into a thin layer, which evaporates at the first gleam of sunshine. Notice, in this respect, the leaves of the garden and greenhouse geraniums.

But, perhaps, the most universal adaptation displayed by leaves to free themselves from water is the formation of long slender apices and pointed teeth along their margins.

Go among the water-loving willows and sprinkle their leaves with water, and observe how quickly and readily the drops run down and fall off from their tapering extremities.

A considerable part of Stahl's work is occupied in a consideration of these apices, and a few simple experiments mentioned there are so instructive, and yet so easily performed, that I would advise you to repeat them. He marked half-a-dozen leaves with long slender ends; three of these he left as they were, the apices of the others he cut off and rounded. He then sprinkled all six with water, and watched. He found that while the leaves with the pointed ends were quite dry in twenty minutes, those which he had rounded were still moist, and remained so for upwards of an hour. The leaves of our willows and poplars are good examples to confirm this.

I will not mention any other of the numerous means adopted by the vast variety of leaves to be found in our English forests and hedgerows, but will leave you to observe the rest for yourselves, believing that in doing so you will find much pleasure and enjoyment.

RUDOLF BEER.

The relation of the form and position of the leaf to rainfall may be easily studied in our common lime, the leaves of which it is most interesting to watch during a shower. Owing to their sloping position the pointed apex is lower than the stalk, so that raindrops falling on the polished surface all run towards the tip, where they collect in a larger drop which rapidly twists off from the point. It is also worth while to notice the shape of the leaf-stalk. In many plants its upper surface is grooved, forming a channel well fitted to carry off the water which has fallen on the blade, but in the lime there is no such channel, the leaf-stalk being rounded, and the same will be found to hold in other trees, *e.g.*, black poplar, where the leaves slope downwards towards a pointed apex. Where the water is run off from the tip it is at once got rid of, but if carried off by the petiole gets only as far as the twig or branchlet; in cases such as these, herbaceous plants have often developed ingenious ways for getting rain drops down to the ground. The lines of hairs running down the stem of the common chickweed from the base of the leaf-stalk to the next lower node form a well-known instance.

Professor J. Wiesner, an Austrian botanist, has recently been studying the behaviour of plants under artificial rain. He finds that under continuous rainfall many plants soon shed their leaves and decay, while others can stand it for many months. The first set he calls *ombrophobe*, the second *ombrophil*. As we should expect, plants growing in dry places are generally ombrophobe; but the Professor did not find that plants loving damp situations

were invariably ombrophil. Older leaves can stand the rain better than the younger, but when their vital activity diminishes, and the time of falling approaches, they gradually lose their power of resistance.

A. B. Rendle.

THE LITTLE EMPEROR.

I AM going to tell you of a little friend of mine who has been for the last two years a great source of pleasure. He is simply the prince of good fellows, and such a companion!

I am told it is of somewhat rare occurrence that this bird is tamed, yet I think his perfect *home-y-ness* shows that it might be as common as it is rare. A bird fancier amused me a few weeks ago by standing in the middle of the library and ejaculating in divers tones, "Well, this *is* a novelty; well, this *is* a novelty!" over and over again. He was brought to me, with a little mate, two and a half years ago, by a friend from St. Helena, and is of the waxbill tribe—a pheasant finch, they tell me.* But there had, I fear, been a *mis*mating, for he never showed his wife the slightest attention; he always had a dozen things to do if she manifested a disposition to nestle up to him, or rest her head against him, and would indeed shake her off at times quite roughly, and chase her all round the cage. The little pair seemed to have no song, only a monotonous chirp. The poor little wife gradually drooped and died, and I regret to say that, after a day of astonished silence, the widower greeted me with a clear and ecstatic little whistling song of joy. Every day afterwards during these happy years he has delighted us with this song, often accompanying it with a rhythmical dance round his own special plant pot, the pot of a large palm which he much affects. We find that he dances in perfect time to the ordinary hornpipe tune, always with a bit of fern or straw or flower stem jauntily carried in his beak.

I began to let him out of his cage when he had grown thoroughly accustomed to me, and never was creature more deserving of liberty. He is of an honourable disposition, for though the library door is often open he never flies into the hall beyond, being quite content with life as he finds it. Three minutes ago he was on my shoulder, carefully examining a fluffy shawl I am wearing, and giving little investigating tugs to the knots. I know he regards it as a workable mine for nest build-

[* The Pheasant Finch, or St. Helena Waxbill (*Estrilda astrild*), has a wide range in Southern Africa, whence it was probably introduced into St. Helena.—Ed. *N.N.*]

ing, two months hence. He is now dissecting and separating the wool with a knowing air. His name is Napoleon. For the rest, he has a little rosy waistcoat and a scarlet bill, with a distinctly fiery eye, and is of the huge length of my thumb—not so long, indeed, without his tail.

Yet this mite hunts all intruders from his domain and drives off the fat bullfinch with furious ardour if that sleek gentleman alights for a moment on *his* cage, *his* plant pot, or even *his* table! The cage may be at the extreme end of the room from him, but his quick ear and eye detect an intruder instantly, and in a moment he darts over, quivering with rage, and hurries out the big bird, three times his size. One old yellow canary (the picture of a particular old bachelor), allowed out sometimes, is an exception. I think his slim golden beauty appeals to certain tropical instincts of the little emperor—in a lordly way he welcomes him if he does not stay too long! If he outstays his welcome, he is hurried off, much flustered and amazed, making little protests in a very weak voice. Napoleon has now become the master of Rollo, a fine sable collie, lately given to us, a big creature for whom he would be but a small mouthful. Perhaps he is jealous of him; anyhow, should the dog cross a certain imaginary line, which includes a bay window and all his treasures, he flies at him fluttering like an angry butterfly, and so abashes and confounds the animal that he hastily retreats. Then comes the song of ecstacy and sometimes the dance!

Napoleon is not expected to go back to prison until nightfall, but being a prisoner on parole, he has to respect orders to some extent, and he does so under protest. He never sees his cage when first offered to him—*never;* he is always busy and pre-occupied. Then he seems to say, "Excuse me, there is still my evening constitutional," and deliberately flies to and fro a few times before going in.

A year ago I began to fear that *vanity* was the leading passion of my little autocrat. I constantly found him bowing and scraping to his own reflection in the glass of photo-frames, polished wood, &c., making soft cooing sounds and joyous whistles, and kissing the reflected little bird again and again, sometimes thirty or forty times running. At first I thought he had developed a beautiful affection for Mr. Ruskin, he gave his picture so many kisses, but I was at length obliged to acknowledge that he was loving himself! and then it struck me that he believed he had found a mate, and was lavishing endearments upon her, so a friend gave him a little looking-glass which has been, and is, a source of endless satisfaction and of occasional disappointment. For instance, in the spring last year, a good six weeks later than our English birds, he grew intent on nest-building. Everything was examined, and all sorts of treasures accumulated behind a letter-weight in a dark little corner of the writing-table. Bits of cotton-wool, tassels, cotton, leaves, grass, and feathers lay in a confused heap, being constantly dragged

about and re-arranged. At this point disappointment came in. The responsive little companion would not help! Again and again he flew to the mirror and appealed to her with his bunch of material in his beak. And there, of course, she stood, equally ready with her bunch! But she never flew down; never made a suggestion, and in course of time he became a little weary of her, and had wistfully and sadly to acknowledge that old times had changed. Or did he find out that she was a sham altogether? I often wondered.

Ought I to get him a real mate, now spring is coming again? I am told he would lose his tameness, and that would be a sad blow to me. Then he is so really happy and takes an immense interest in all I do, comes to look into every drawer I open, perches near me when I lie down to rest, and most expressively asks why I have been so dumb and stupid for the last hour, comes to inspect my writing, teazes me by throwing down everything he can carry, when the humour is on him, scolding when I scold. His morning greeting and his sleepy goodnight chirp are in themselves a joy, and almost best of all is the delicious and constant sense of hovering wings and dainty life which he gives to me. And I cannot forget the tragic end of his last poor wife! There are a hundred quaint and charming characteristics of his left untold, but you have at least an idea of the delightful personality of my little emperor.

ROSALINA OAKES.

A SONG FOR SPRING.

ALL the hazels down the hedges
Yellow catkins fling,
Golden pennants gaily waving
In the van of spring!

And the lark climbs up to heaven,
Chanting clear and strong,
Climbing up a skyey ladder
Built of staves of song.

And the grey clouds over white clouds
Race across a deeper sky.
And I know not which is gladdest,
Bird, or cloud, or I.

J. LEWTON BRAIN.

SEPTEMBER IN NEW ZEALAND.

THIS month the thermometer registered 76° in the shade of the verandah. Last month in the same situation the hottest day was less by eight degrees.

With this increasing warmth the grass has come on wonderfully. The clovers, too, show signs of growth again. As I lie on the sward waiting for the shepherds and sheep, moving more slowly in the greater heat, I see that every foot of ground is full of life and movement. Ants cross and recross each other, one dragging with infinite toil and labour a tiny struggling caterpillar; a spider, with dark blue body and scarlet legs, moves apparently without purpose or aim through the cropped thicket of inch-high grass. In the sundew's clammy leaves are to be found spiders, ants, and flies, struggling or already dead. There is a little history of life and work and death in each square inch of turf. The sap exuding from bored trees attracts now many insects and bees. Specimens of a butterfly very nearly allied to the "painted lady" of England are now becoming more numerous, although throughout the whole winter a few have been abroad. The caterpillar lives on a species of native nettle. When feeding, this gaudy and handsome butterfly will allow no other insect to approach, flapping its brilliant wings suddenly from time to time, and thus keeping all intruders at a distance.

Great flocks of starlings are about the run, though I have never known one stay to build. Many native birds, however, are now preparing their nests. The kingfishers' harsh cries may now be heard as they chase each other, their green-blue backs gleaming in the sunshine, almost as if they had dipped in the blue of the streams they love, and the colour had adhered to their plumage. They often build in a sand bank by the edge of a brook, the hole sloping gently upwards. About a foot in, upon the bare flat earth, are deposited the four or five round white eggs. Holes are also made in the boles of rotten trees. Last year I noticed a kingfisher at work upon a stump only six or seven inches in diameter—a curious example of erring instinct. Unlike many indigenous birds, this handsome species seems to increase in the land. The birds are very savage when sitting, and will strike at the intruding hand, and hold on until almost pulled out. In very dry weather cherries and fragments of other fruits are conveyed by the parents to their young. Grubs, worms, grasshoppers, mice, and small fish are also devoured by the kingfisher. The pigeon, too, with its roughly constructed nest through which the white eggs can be almost seen, is also building in the bush. On a clear morning after rain, the "kuku," or "kereru" as the natives call him, loves to sun himself, the rays gleaming on the coppery-green and purple of his back, and head, and neck. When perched and motionless the bird is hard

to detect, the white abdomen harmonising perfectly with the flat white lichens that wrap the boles and boughs of surrounding trees. It is a very stupid, or a very confiding bird. Even the report of a gun, and the slaughter of a companion on the same branch causes no alarm.

Not many years ago a native got over forty brace on the run during a single afternoon; now not half that number are secured in the course of the whole shooting season. The pigeon when fat is excellent eating, but during some months the flesh becomes bitter from certain berries and leaves. The dark fruit of the "wawao" is said to discolour the flesh with its dye. In this month, during showery weather, the strange wild cry of the weka may often be heard. They seem to be specially uneasy before rain, or in wet weather. The note never fails to recall to me the weird, moorland cry of the curlew. The weka, though possessed of large wings, is quite unable to use them for flight. It is a prolific breeder, and sometimes the eggs are laid as early as August, and I have seen the jet-black chicks early in September. This rail is a very inquisitive creature, and will carry off anything bright or glittering. While fishing upon one occasion, one of these birds attempted to purloin my artificial minnow. An old sardine tin is a great prize. Buller says he has known it take away meerschaum pipes, spoons, pannikins, boxes of matches, even, upon one occasion, a watch from a bushman's hut. In districts where there are rabbits, the weka is looked upon as a friend and ally. It not only kills the rabbits above ground, but enters the burrows in search of the young.

This month the yellow kowhai (*Sophora tetraptera* var. *grandiflora*) is in its fullest bloom, and the flowers of the scented white rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*) set off the green of our rather sombre woods. When ruffled in a breeze, too, the silver-backed leaves whiten and shine. These, and wreaths of clematis, give any colour there is to the September woods. The air is full, however, of the scent of gummy, bursting buds, and the spikes of the ti (*Cordyline*), already lean with the promise of October's blossoms.

H. Guthrie-Smith.

Cruelty to Starlings.—On Saturday morning, December 9, 1893, forty starlings were brought me in a bag, made by sewing up a man's dirty jersey, the neck being tied round with string. Holes were punched at intervals in the jersey (like those in Alcock's plaster), and the wretched birds were thrusting their beaks through them. The man who sold them warranted that they would keep, as packed, in good condition for shooting from traps till Monday. We took them out one by one, and they flew away, some weakly, but they must have been very recently caught, as the metallic sheen on their wings was in most cases undimmed. They were still strong to bear many hours', perhaps days', torture. Of course, to buy them was but to encourage the trapper, but we could not have endured to leave them in that bag all Sunday.

Vaughan House, Croydon. E. Phillips.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

The Butterflies and Moths of Teneriffe, by A. E. Holt White (London: L. Reeve and Co., 1894), pp. xii., 108, 4 plates. The authoress of this unpretentious but useful work took up the collecting of butterflies and moths while visiting Teneriffe for her health, and not finding any available manual on the subject, has compiled the little book before us, which, though only written for the use of amateurs, yet puts into the hands of scientific entomologists a fairly complete account of the larger *Lepidoptera* of a very small, but very interesting region. The Madeiras and Canaries will not bear a comparison, as regards the richness of their fauna, with any part of Europe; but they not only produce several species peculiar to themselves, but some of the common European species which spread to these islands are so profoundly modified as to be almost distinct, while other species are found only in North Africa, North America, or most remarkable of all, in the East Indies. What was known respecting Canarian Lepidoptera was scattered through many publications very difficult of access, and while congratulating Mrs. Holt White on the success with which she has worked out her subject, we can only express a wish that by her example other ladies, visiting countries to the insects or plants of which they can find no printed guide, may be encouraged to supply the want that they have experienced.

W. F. K.

Mr. John Davidson's *Random Itinerary* is a record of "notes and impressions of the remarkable spring and summer of 1893." It is published by Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane, which is equivalent to saying that in paper, print, and binding it leaves nothing to be desired. Mr. Davidson's rambles are mainly round London—to Epping Forest, Finsbury Park, and Hampton Wick, sometimes stretching as far as Amersham and the Chilterns; at others, in such humble surroundings as the Isle of Dogs and Old Ford, or among our parks and squares. To say that his impressions are vivid and his notes readable is to say little in praise of this charming little book. From his appreciation of the suburbs, and his delight at the country, we should say Mr. Davidson is a Londoner born :—

> "Whose spirit leaps more high,
> Plucking the pale primrose,
> Than his whose feet must fly
> The pasture where it grows?"

It is a book for Londoners to read and delight in. They will think more of, say, St. James's Park, when they have read Mr. Davidson's delightful account of the ducks on the lake and the flowers in the beds. For the orchids in Kew Gardens he has as little affection as Mr. Ruskin, but he is at home among the trees, whether in the parks or out on the hill sides, as well as with the wild flowers, though we must demur to the statement that "coltsfoot shone among the turf, little nuggets of pure gold," on the Chiltern Hills in the middle of July! and a residence for some years in High Wycombe hardly prepared us to find that busy town described as "all fantastic, *built on hills*." When we add that a very pretty humour enlivens the pages, and that the itinerant considers "Gilbert White's book the only authority on Natural History in the world," we have said more than enough to commend this dainty little volume to Selbornians.

Another book in which they will delight is Mr. H. S. Salt's "study" of *Richard Jefferies* (Sonnenschein, 2s. 6d.). The term is aptly chosen, for it is no mere biography which Mr. Salt has given us, but an extremely careful and sympathetic analysis of Jefferies' work. He is a discriminating eulogist, and although we may not agree with Mr. Salt in considering the *Story of My Heart* "the most noteworthy of Jefferies' complete volumes," we are quite at one with him when he says "He was an essayist and not a novelist at all, nor under any circumstances could he have become a novelist." "Of the shorter essays, the two best and most characteristic," Mr. Salt thinks, "are the 'Pageant of Summer'—that wonderful rhapsody aglow with all the fire of Jefferies' idealism—and 'Hours of Spring,' in which the contrary picture of wintry desolation is enforced in terrible distinctness. To those who would rightly understand the sun-

shine and the shadow, the mingled vein of hopefulness and despondency, that run through Jefferies' temperament, I would recommend a comparative study of these two masterpieces." A portrait faces the title, and there is a complete bibliography. The little volume well deserves a place in every Selbornian's library.

The Horse World of London is a recent addition to the excellent series of well printed, suitably illustrated, and neatly bound books, which the Religious Tract Society issues in the 'Leisure Hour Library.' Mr. W. J. Gordon has brought together an extraordinary amount of information about horses of all kinds, the Queen's horse and the coal horse, the omnibus horse and the "black brigade" or funeral horse, the post office horse, and many more, from which we learn that the occupations of horses are almost as various as those of their employers; and we are saddened when we come to "the end," although the usefulness of this friend of man does not terminate with his life. If the books which we have already noticed are for the study shelf or for the private library, here is one which should be in every school bookcase, and a standard prize in every Band of Mercy or Juvenile Branch of the Selborne Society. We must not forget to add that Mr. Gordon's pleasant style lends an additional interest to his interesting subject.

SELBORNIANA.

Cage Birds (*N.N.*, 1893, pp. 173, 215, 240; 1894, p. 38).—There are three points raised by the arguments which Ethel G. Woodd brings forward in support of the caging of birds upon which I should like to say a few words. Firstly, there can be no comparison drawn between birds and other domestic animals, since the former alone are winged, and constructed in every particular—inclusive of special cellular bone formation, an unique development of lung, and a peculiar contrivance of the foot and leg—for a life to be spent in the air or amid boughs. Cats, dogs, and all quadrupeds have at least the option of exercising all four limbs, if at all properly kept, while the cage bird is robbed of this privilege. It is only needful to read that saddest of books, "Bechstein on Cage Birds," to realise what sufferings inevitably result from caging, which are unknown to the free bird. The maladies entailed by imprisonment naturally lead me to those brought on by unnatural dict, my second point. It is not possible, with the best intentions, to supply a caged bird, all the year round, with the series of food in right succession and variety, or to ascertain when change is required until the necessity for it is impressed on the mind of its owner by some symptom indicative of disease. In a free state birds doctor themselves and avoid illness by alternating different meats of that great table in the wilderness so bountifully spread by the merciful hand of Him Who cares for the fowls of the air, which neither sow nor reap. Lastly, although the bird itself when caged fortunately may not be able fully to realise how pitifully warped its small destiny has been in being torn from the rightful home in the green trees, the human bystander can, if tender hearted, know, though not to the full, what the little captive has missed, and feels remorse accordingly. It is this that makes a caged bird, to all thinking people, such a melancholy spectacle. To me, nothing bears a more grievous witness to that terrible form of self love which can find pleasure in sacrificing to itself, without ruth, the joys of tiny innocent things. It is satisfactory to learn that popular feeling is taking a right turn in this respect. The clever leader writer of the *Daily Graphic*, in giving an account of the last cage bird show at the Crystal Palace, comments strongly on the cruelty of caging the citizens of the air, in particular the kingfisher; adding that the whole show filled him personally with an ardent desire to open all the cage doors and let the birds go. It is to be hoped that this wholesome spirit will spread, and that the next generation will see this strain upon modern civilisation removed; otherwise the question will be decided by the fact that no birds will be left to cage. A London dealer lately confessed that four out of every twelve was the proportion which survived the first caging. EDITH CARRINGTON.

[We cannot insert further communications on this subject.—Ed. *N. N.*]

A Fisherman Naturalist.—Last summer, while on my holidays, I made the acquaintance of a most interesting man. He lives in a small three-roomed cottage in a little out-of-the-way village—composed of about six cottages—on the Ayrshire coast. I was taking a long country walk one day, and chanced to pass through the village mentioned. Outside one of the cottages I saw a fisherman mending his nets. Being rather tired, and feeling I would like a little rest, I started, in a casual manner, a conversation with the man. We talked about different things, and during our little chat he dropped remarks that made me think he knew something about the birds and animals in the neighbourhood, and I found, on asking him, that he was a bit of a naturalist. He told me that from his boyhood he had always had a strong liking for natural history, and that he had made a collection of the different birds, insects, eggs, &c., he had found. On my telling him I should like to see what he had done, he took me into his cottage. One of the three rooms is set apart for his museum ; the walls are lined with cases upon cases of beautifully stuffed birds, his own handiwork. In a corner of the room stands an old bureau, in the drawers of which he has his collection of eggs, neatly arranged ; above the bureau is a glass case, in which he has insects and fishes preserved in spirits, and placed on the walls, wherever there was space enough, I noticed cases of mounted butterflies, moths, and beetles. He has also a collection of the different kinds of rocks found in the neighbourhood, and some of the finer specimens of serpentine he has polished, by the aid of sandstone and water and the ball part of his thumb. I also saw a small collection of fossils and plants, which he has made. On a table, in the middle of the room, I noticed a couple of birds, and prepared bird skins, as well as a nice little microscope in a case, which a gentleman passing through the village had sent him as a present. This fisher-naturalist is fond of saying that he has never killed any creature except when it was necessary for his collection ; of course this remark does not hold good in the following of his trade ; but the man *has* to fish in order to live. He has only found books necessary in the naming of his collection, and every specimen has a little label gummed to it on which is its scientific and common name. He says that people should study natural history, not by reading books, but by observing things for themselves. The sight of what this man has done, without money or friends to help him, shows what can be accomplished when a man is a true lover of nature.

Dumbarton. ROBERT F. MCCONNELL.

Feeding the Birds.—Few bird-lovers, I imagine, wish to feed the voracious starling and sparrow, these being already too numerous. Therefore, in hard weather it is well to strew the bits of meat and scraps intended specially for the thrushes, and also for the blackbird, hedge-sparrow, wren, and robin, under the hedges or close to the walls of the garden, where the former birds do not search. During the late frost I found that apples and pears, more or less decayed, were greatly appreciated by all the birds, from tits and finches up to starlings and rooks. To the soft-billed birds particularly the fruit is a boon when every moist thing out of doors is frozen hard.

Weston-super-Mare. T. P.

Bird Netting (p. 17).—For a couple of years I lived at Southend. While living there I often took a walk on Sunday into the country, and was distressed to see so many loafers bird-netting. I have often seen as many as a dozen groups of them, in different fields and along the shore, netting the poor little birds. They were there Sunday after Sunday, and were never interfered with. For all I know they are there yet.

Dumbarton. ROBERT F. MCCONNELL.

The late W. G. Wheatcroft.—On Christmas Eve, at the age of 60, passed away Mr. W. G. Wheatcroft, the founder and first honorary secretary of the Bath Branch of the Selborne Society. To Mr. Wheatcroft is due the entire credit of the establishment of the Society in Bath in the early months of 1887, and his article, "How to form Branch Societies," appears in the *Selborne Letters* for September of that year. Since that time he has thrown himself heartily into the work, and by pen and personal influence and labour was never

weary in promoting the objects of the Society, and so late as October last we published an obituary notice of the Rev. Leonard Blomefield from his hand. Mr. Wheatcroft was not only an enthusiastic student of botany but he also took a keen interest in all branches of natural history. Only last year he read a paper on "Polyzoa" before the Bath Microscopical Society, of which he was President in 1889, and at the time of his death he was preparing a paper on "Birds of Prey" for the local branch of the Selborne Society. During the earlier part of his residence in Bath Mr. Wheatcroft suffered much from ill health, which prevented him from following his profession as a solicitor at all closely. He devoted his spare time to obtaining a practical acquaintance with the flora of the neighbourhood, and thus was able at the time of the meeting of the British Association in Bath in 1888 to contribute the article on "The Flora of Bath" to the official Guide Book.

A Word for the other Side.—Why does not Mr. Hudson (NATURE NOTES, 1893, p. 212), include in his excited censure the men whose cruelty supplies these feathers, and supplies them for the sake of gain? and the merchant who as middleman takes another profit out of these beautiful birds? It is curious to read that "men who live in a rougher world are sickened at the thought of it," and yet men are the only instruments by which the cruelty can be performed, and the feathers obtained! Stop the supply and the demand *could* not be satisfied. Does your Society really think that women would procure these feathers for themselves if none were to be had in the shops? As things are now with respect to the buying of them, we may, I fear, safely say that three-fourths of the ladies who wear birds' wings have not been taught sufficient natural history to know where they come from, or that they cost in any way more than the money paid to the milliner by themselves. If your Society, or Mr. Hudson, would go to the root of the matter, and set the law in motion against the wretches who do all that he describes on the first page of his letter—killing these beautiful birds apparently with every circumstance of cruelty—the evil traffic would surely be brought to an end sooner than it can be by heaping invectives on the least guilty of those concerned.

ELEANOR GROVE.

The late Sir Harry Verney.—Selbornians will read with interest the following letter, addressed in February, 1892, to our correspondent, Mr. J. E. Whiting, by the late Sir Harry Verney, whose death took place last month. The letter is reproduced by Mr. Whiting's permission. "When I read such a letter as yours in the *Highgate and Hampstead Express*, I thank God that the work of Mr. Sharpe and Mr. Ager in Middle Claydon School has not been unproductive, but that it produced and stimulated ability to take interest in and to describe so admirably and truly the habits of birds that I see on the lawn, and on the oak and Scotch fir east of the churchyard, and of a squirrel that is running up the oak—all rejoicing in the melting snow and the returned green, under my eye while I am writing. I rejoice heartily in your close observation of the works of Nature—that is, the works of the God of Nature—so far more exquisite and beautiful than the most beautiful of those of art. The appearance of our dear Queen in her royal robes is less beautiful than the rose or the lily; and the man or woman who loves the works of God is led naturally, and by sure sequence, to the love of God Himself. . . . I am pretty well, considering my age, more than ninety years, and now the frost is going, I hope to resume my gentle rides—gentle ones, not like that of my thousand miles across the Pampas on wild horses, and in danger of Indians wilder still, more than sixty years since."

The Tennyson Band of Mercy (see p. 24).—Lady Tennyson is desirous that it should be known that she has from the first relaxed the rules as to birds' eggs and butterflies in favour of those members who make collections of these for study. She also gives bottles with the proper acids for speedily suffocating butterflies and moths.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Chaffinches and the Severe Frost.—On Sunday, January 1, I took a walk over Southborough Common. It was a lovely bright sunny day, with a keen white frost covering every turf and blade of grass with glittering silver, but there was no wind, so that the still air did not feel so cold as it really was. All over the beautiful Southborough Common might have been seen hundreds, nay, thousands of chaffinches, hopping over the short frosty grass, not in flocks, but in little groups of two and three, more especially in spots where the sun's rays had thawed the ground. There were both cocks and hens, seemingly in the proportion of about one cock to two of the latter. The writer was surprised at this, because though an old hen or two may always be found in winter lurking about houses and gardens, especially in cold weather, where they feed with the sparrows and other birds on the crumbs and bits thrown out to them, the cocks, with their pretty rich-coloured plumage, are more seldom seen, and never, as far as I know, a lot at a time. It struck me at the time that these birds must be visitors from the Continent, flying before the cold and foretelling a sharp spell of bitter weather. This seems to have been the case, for two days after (Thursday, January 5), the thermometer went down to 6 below zero in the immediate neighbourhood of Tunbridge Wells. It would be interesting to hear if other correspondents noticed unusual movements of birds before the late severe weather.

Tunbridge Wells. R. M. Ewor.

A Wasp's Nest.—While repairing bell wires on the 14th of January in a dark attic, I discovered a nest, either a hornet's or wasp's, attached to a beam, the insects evidently entering through some holes under the eaves. On taking it down, which was no easy matter, it measured in depth 10 inches, 33½ inches in circumference at the widest part. It contains no less than seven layers of comb, and is altogether a very beautiful specimen of insect work, and by its appearance seems to have been unoccupied for a few years.

Windermere. John Brown.

A Strange Poacher.—It is generally supposed that cats, although very fond of fish, are the least likely creatures to attempt to catch any for themselves. Every one must must be familiar with the lady-like way in which they step over the little pools of water or muddy parts they often meet with in their daily outings; but from the following facts it will be seen that cats are not afraid of water after all. A friend of mine, whose house and garden are situated on the banks of the North Queich, one of the main feeders of Loch Leven in Kinross-shire, is in possession of a very fine large grey cat, which, like others of its kind, sometimes seems very much afraid at water. During the close season, large numbers of the famous Loch Leven trout come up the water to spawn, and a few of them are generally to be found passing up or down, or quietly lying still in the somewhat shallow part opposite the garden. It is no uncommon thing for some people to "take" one or two of these "lochies," as they are locally termed, for they are very easily killed; but as neither my friend nor any of his household was inclined to this sort of "business," he was much surprised to find, on several occasions, a few of these trout, more or less eaten, lying in his garden. All likely sources were thought of before the cat was suspected. A watch was at once set on her movements, my friend taking up a position within view of the supposed field of operations. It was a clear, moonlight night, and the fish, as they ploughed their way up and down through the water, were easily discernible, their backs being more or less out of the water. Before waiting very long, the cat came and sat on a stone, close by the edge of the burn and over a foot above the surface of the water. A number of fish passed and repassed before one came within range, when the cat splashed into the water, and the next moment was standing on the bank, giving herself a shake, with a splendid fish between her teeth. She went off, but soon returned to her former position, and after a short time secured another fish. Being now satisfied, my friend came from his hiding place; he found the two fish on the grass, and at a safe distance a number of cats from the neighbouring parlours, waiting for the prospective feast.

Cupar, Fife, N.B. J. D. Milna.

Do Snails Squeak? (p. 17).—The following incident will, I fear, do little towards furnishing an answer to this question, but may possess some little interest of its own. When a boy I spent a good deal of my spare time at a house, which was, indeed, a second home to me, where, in one of my frequent visits, I was told of an event that had caused some consternation, and, afterwards, a good deal of merriment. The household had just separated for the night, when in the bedroom of its two youngest members arose an unmistakable wail, which, after a rather long interval, was repeated. Of course a general search of the room followed, and the sound seeming to come from the direction of the window, the source of it was sought outside as well as inside the house; but for some time without success. At last a wail came so certainly from the window itself, that the cause of it was found to be a garden snail crawling slowly, with long pauses (it had been raining), up the wet window pain, and producing, with each effort, the seemingly unearthly noise. It was thought at the time that the sound was caused by the contact of its shell with the glass; but I am now inclined to believe that, as the shell is usually well lifted when in motion, it arose from the pressure of the snail itself upon the wet glass, in the same way that musical notes are produced by a wetted finger from musical glasses, and unmusical sounds from window panes by harder sliding pressure.

RICHARD F. TOWNDROW.

Nests of Field Mice.—I would like to ask you whether it is true that field mice have the entrance to their nests towards the south if the following winter will be severe, and towards the north if mild? Is it also a fact that these openings never face east or west?

MARION HORACE-SMITH.

Small Birds chasing Hawk (p. 39).—I think it is a very common occurrence to see small birds teasing hawks and owls. I have on several occasions seen swallows doing this, and not long since, I saw a kestrel seize a swallow that had made a dive below it, and so lost its life through its temerity. Sparrows and linnets may often be seen chasing crows or magpies. These small birds seem to take great delight in attacking their enemies when there is a sufficient number of them together, and so distract his attention that he cannot follow them individually. I have seen a swallow even strike a hawk with its wing. The small birds generally keep up a continual chatter as they buffet him, and on these occasions the hawk appears much worried and even frightened, and will try and get under cover of trees to shake them off.

Hampstead. H. HARRIS.

It is not a very rare occurrence, that of lesser birds mobbing a hawk; and it was noticed as early as Homer's time, especially of starlings.

> "And as of starlings or of daws, a cloud with clamorous cry
> Sweeps onward when approaching near the falcon they espy,
> That bane of lesser birds; so," &c.
>
> *Iliad*, xvii., 755.

Again the poet says—

> "Patroclus is as a hawk
> That scares the flock of starlings or of daws."
>
> *Iliad*, xvi., 582.

There is abundance of bird lore in Homer; these are but two specimens of many that I have gathered.

Kepworth Rectory, Suffolk. W. C. GREEN.

Birds at Windows (p. 37).—The birds that have fed at my windows this winter are sparrows, of course—they, and a robin, my old friend of five winters, with a damaged bill, fly into the room and eat biscuit from a plate on the table, put originally for the robin only. Fat is hung on a string just outside the window, and is visited by the great tits, tomtits, and one or more marsh tits (though I only see one at a time), a pair of chaffinches, and a cock and hen blackbird, also one or more robins, besides the one above mentioned. Rooks, starlings, hedge-sparrows, two more chaffinches, feed on the gravel just below the door steps, and I saw a yellowhammer and black headed bunting on the lawn one morning.

Neston, Cheshire. MARY RATHBONE.

Dog Chased by Hare.—The incident of the starlings chasing the hawk reminds me of what occurred a few years ago in Wiltshire. A dog had caught sight of a hare and chased it for about a quarter of a mile, when the hare, meeting with some obstruction, turned back upon the dog. Upon this the dog ran away, and the hare followed until within a protective distance of the dog's master. I have several times seen a hawk mobbed by small birds.

WILLIAM WHITE.

Cat and Sparrows.—A very curious occurrence took place on January 18, while I happened to be in my garden. A long haired, sandy cat with a short tail, the tail having a kind of hook at the extremity, was sitting at the foot of an apple tree, watching some sparrows hopping about in the branches. Suddenly, without any fluttering, one of the birds—a sparrow—fell to the ground close to the cat, apparently dead. Of course the cat snatched it up at once and commenced to play with it; the bird was not dead, as it got away from the cat once and flew several yards. I think that if the bird had been left alone it would have recovered. I also saw a sparrow with a long beak like that of a woodpecker. I thought at first that it was a woodpecker, but on getting closer I could see that it undoubtedly was a sparrow. It comes daily to be fed with crumbs like other birds. Is this long beak a common occurrence?

Kew. W. J.

A Florida Tortoise (p. 25.)—A friend of mine tells me that she knew a large tortoise of this kind. It was kept in a garden at St. Leonards, and was very fond of lettuce. But its chief delight was in dandelions—flower, stalk and leaf—these it devoured greedily, seeming to prefer them to any other food.

A. W. HARTE.

Birds in a London Garden.—During the few days of hard frost we had lately, I fed the birds with crumbs, &c. Amongst the birds which came to be fed I noticed the following: a thrush, a blackbird, two hen chaffinches, a pair of robins, a blue tit, and a great many starlings and sparrows. Contrary to my expectations the robins were the most shy. The chaffinches were bold, and the thrush came quite regularly. He took care to get the best pieces, and drove away any of the others that ventured too near him. The above is, I think, a very good list for a London garden.

Finsbury Park. E. B. LLOYD.

Birds' Beaks (p. 39).—I enclose a photograph of a rook that was shot in this neighbourhood by a friend, who took it for a carrion crow, as it was solitary. The beak has the appearance of having had its extremity taken off by a trap. Where shot it was perfectly healed and "callused" over. The wonder is that it had been able to feed.

Ivybridge. J. D. POOLE.

I fear that the birds without beaks are not victims of accident or disease. Some years since, the conduct of some boys at a large and well known school near London, was brought before my notice. They had a horrible species of trap for catching birds by the beak; sparrows especially fell victims, and some liberated themselves by leaving their beaks in the traps. These poor birds soon died of starvation; they had been seen in their deplorable state by my informant. I much regretted being unable to obtain the information through a channel that could have been used in procuring a severe punishment for such barbarity.

M. R. F. S.

The birds without beaks had no doubt been caught in that abominably cruel contrivance the gin or trap of the schoolboy. I see the R.S.P.C.A. are offering prizes for a really humane trap. I hope inventors will bestir themselves. The scream of the poor rabbit or hedgehog when trapped, often takes off a great deal of the pleasure of an evening's walk in the woods.

Fyfield, Abingdon. W. H. WARNER.

Dog and Dove.—I was staying with my niece, Mrs. C. Dorrington, at Witney. A tame dove used to be let out of its cage during breakfast; a small Scotch terrier was also in the room. These two unlikely playfellows commenced a game which amused and interested us very much. It began by the dove attack-

ing the dog. At first Jack seemed frightened, but after a while he began to advance instead of retreating as he did at first, and there seemed a danger that the dove might come to grief, as its head used to disappear in Jack's mouth, but he never hurt the bird. A kitten, too, took part in these gambols, which were carried on till the dove died a natural death.

Sheffield. HELEN WAKE.

Blackbirds and Crumbs (p. 39).—The blackbirds which frequent my garden during severe weather are by no means partial to crumbs, but devour greedily the rotten apples I throw out for them. During the spell of sharp frosts which occurred at the beginning of January, a fieldfare made its appearance in the garden, and, like its congener the blackbird, evinced a most decided partiality for the apples.

Fyfield, Abingdon. W. H. WARNER.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. A.—The special articles we had in view were those entitled "The Researches of Herr Hardhardt," to which the footnote of the writer—"a libel on scientific men" seems to us entirely applicable.

C. N. (Dunbar).—Please read our first rule.

W. F.—*Stereum hirsutum.*

H. E. L.—A series of articles on foreign cage birds was published by Mr. Arthur G. Butler some two or three years since in *The Feathered World*: these will shortly be re-issued in book form at a low price.

M. J. B.—The sermon is No. 60 of the Tract Series, published by the Wesleyan Conference; it may be had at 66, Paternoster Row. It is called "The Great Deliverance."

E. S.—Yes, certainly.

H. G.—Mr. W. F. Kirby says: "It is the female of the Brimstone butterfly, the male being of a brimstone colour, and the female of the paler tint described. It is a common butterfly in the South, and may be found during almost every season of the year."

W. J. M.—Your suggestion is one for the publishers, to whom we have forwarded your letter.

H. W. and **E. G.**—Kindly note our Rule 4.

The Council of the Selborne Society has decided to reserve the last page of each number of NATURE NOTES for announcements connected with the Society, and over this page the Editor exercises no control. This still further lessens the space at our disposal, and we shall more than ever have to claim the indulgence of our numerous contributors for the delay which may occur in inserting their communications.

WE MUST REQUEST THOSE WHO FAVOUR US WITH THEIR COMMUNICATIONS TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 9, Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

THE fund towards clearing off the debt of £70 which was owing to the Hon. Treasurer, has nearly reached the amount required. The following members have sent in donations between January 16 and February 14:—Mrs. Crossley, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Sumner, Miss A. M. Langdon, Miss J. Brown, Miss L. S. Humble, Mr. F. Coles, Mr. R. Osmond, Miss Burt, Mr. H. J. Slack, Mrs. Laidlay, and the Misses Brand.

At the Council meeting, held on the 7th inst, it was unanimously resolved: "To tender the grateful thanks of the Council to Mr. A. T. Craig for the very great trouble he has taken in securing the liquidation of the debt of £70 due to the hon. treasurer."

Field Club Meetings.—At a meeting held on February 14, it was resolved to form an acting Committee consisting of the following:—Mrs. Percy Myles, Messrs. Allen, Dymes, Edwards, Gerish, Martin, Wattson, and Western. A programme of Saturday afternoon rambles from April to June, will shortly be issued. All information may be obtained of the Secretary, Field Club Committee, 9, Adam Street, Adelphi.

Members changing the address to which they wish the magazine sent should notify the Secretary not later than the 21st of the month.

The next meetings of the Council will be held on March 7 and April 4. The Magazine Committee will meet on March 19 at 5.30.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Croydon.—An interesting Natural History Conversazione was held at Seneca Hall, Thornton Heath, on the 6th inst, by kind permission of the Rev. F. J. Bird. A fine collection of local birds and their eggs was exhibited by Messrs. Wright and Adeney; Mr. E. A. Martin displaying a selection of his fossils and minerals, local and otherwise. It is hoped these may form the nucleus of a local museum, which is much wanted in the district.

Lower Thames Valley.—Subscriptions and all correspondence relating to this Branch should be sent to the Financial Secretary, Mr. W. Jones, Somerleigh, St. Margarets, Twickenham.

Pinner.—At the quarterly Branch meeting, held at the Dove House, by kind permission of Mrs. Blewitt, on January 30, a popular address was given by Mr. H. R. Brown, junr., on "The Season of Rest" (with special reference to butterflies), before a large audience. The subject was dealt with in a very able manner, and a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the lecturer.

New Branches.—Arrangements are being made for the formation of Branches at High Barnet and Matlock. Members in these localities willing to assist are requested to communicate with the Secretary, 9, Adam Street, Adelphi.

Annual Meeting.—The Council are making arrangements for this to be held during *May*, further details of which will be given in our next issue.

ANNUAL PAYMENTS FROM BRANCHES.

To amount brought forward	£9	3	7	Haslemere	2 0 5
Atalanta	0	7	5	Markwick	0 9 8
Cambridge	2	5	0	Richard Jefferies (Worthing)	0 10 0
Croydon	0	11	1		
Halifax	1	19	6		£17 6 8

Communications for this page must be received not later than March 15. They should *not exceed fifty words*, and should be addressed to the Secretary, Magazine Committee, 9, Adam Street, Adelphi.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

On and after March 25, the address of the Society will be **20, Hanover Square, W.**, where all business communications should be addressed.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 52. APRIL, 1894. Vol. V.

ENGLISH COMMONS AND FORESTS.*

THE turbid flood which obliterates landmarks and sweeps buildings, trees, cattle, hay-ricks and corn-ricks before it, is the outcome of a thousand swollen streamlets, each, it may be, of scarce a foot's span. In like manner the historians of the great revolutions that have taken place in the history of mankind are all agreed in ascribing the event they severally chronicle, not to one cause, but to many. So the great revolution wrought by the quiet and persistent endeavours of the Commons Preservation Society, aided and often instigated by "village Hampdens" and right-minded landlords, took its origin from that point of time when the encroachments of those "petty tyrants," the lords of the manor, endured for centuries, had become too grievous to be borne.

What Carlyle has done for the service of constitutions by his *History of the French Revolution*, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre has most ably accomplished in the cause of our commons and forests, and the rights of the public attaching thereto, by his description, at once elaborate and vivid, of a thirty years' struggle and its antecedents. Not an easy struggle, because the rank and file of the legal profession was then—whatever they may be now—convinced, as Professor Freeman says, that, "as there has been an hereditary king from all eternity, so there has been an hereditary lord of the manor from a time only so far short of eternity, as to give the king time to make him a grant."†

The author has drawn aside the dark veil which till lately

* *English Commons and Forests: the Story of the Battle during the last Thirty Years for Public Rights over the Commons and Forests of England and Wales.* By the Right. Hon. G. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P. (London: Cassell & Co., 10s. 6d.)

† *History of the Norman Conquest*, v., 460-461.

obscured the origin of English commons, and has given us in brief the views thereon of Nasse, Von Maurer and Sir Henry Maine:

"The common rights now existing are in most cases survivals of a system of collective ownership of land by the inhabitants of their several districts, the prevalence of which in the early stages of communities has been traced over the greater part of Europe. Under this system there was originally no individual ownership of land. It was owned in common by village communities. That portion of it only which was suitable and necessary for production of corn and other crops was enclosed and cultivated; the remainder was open to the cattle of all, and all the members of the community were entitled to cut turf and bracken there for their fuel and litter. The enclosed part was generally divided into three great fields for a three-course system of husbandry, of which one field was in turn left in fallow. Each of these fields was divided into a certain number of equal parts, which were distributed annually by lot among the heads of families constituting the village community."

Freeman also throws the weight of his testimony into the scale of evidence when he tells us that "actual common lands, the remains of the most ancient form of property, must, as is shown by the large traces of them that still exist, have been far more usual than the entries in Domesday would lead us to think."*

So things went on till after the Norman Conquest. The Normans found the "mark" or village community ready to hand, and converted it into the "manor."† The military chief who was placed at its head "had the right of summoning to arms the inferior landowners within his district or manor." Though dependants—

"They held their land on certain tenure, and not at the mere will of the lord, and they had the right of turning out their cattle on the waste land of the manor. But an inferior class called villeins held their land and houses solely at the will of the lord, and a yet lower class with no holdings became the lord's serfs, or bondsmen."

The temptation on the part of the lords of the manor to treat the common lands as their own property was too strong to be resisted, and, not content with this, they claimed the right of inclosing portions of it to be farmed by their villeins.

The Parliament of Barons (for no commoners had as yet been summoned) set its seal on this claim in the Statute of Merton (1235) to the effect "that the lords of the manor should be allowed to inclose, or approve, as it was called, parts of the waste lands of their manors, provided it should appear, on complaint of the free tenants, that there was left a sufficiency of common to satisfy their rights, with free access thereto." This Statute of Merton became the pivot upon which the inclosure system turned with one important break of time, which we shall notice, right down to present days.

About the reign of Henry IV., the admission of the villeins

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* *History of the Norman Conquest*, v., 463.

† The words "manor" and "mark" are not convertible terms, the former meaning "dwelling-place," and the latter "boundary."

to fixity of tenure in respect of the lands they occupied is first recorded. This was the origin of copyhold, and as they, too, had recognised rights over the waste of the manor, the power of inclosing became greatly limited. These copyholders were the origin of the yeoman class, and the serfs, who became freemen about the same period at which the villeins were raised in the social scale, were the forerunners of our agricultural labourer.

The appropriation of monasteries, together with the vast lands pertaining thereto, by Henry VIII., gave an impetus to the system of inclosure, but by the reign of Queen Anne the powers of the Statute of Merton had become narrowed down, as the Courts of Law gave protection against arbitrary inclosure. Henceforth, up to quite recent date, inclosure took place by separate Acts of Parliament. By 1846, four thousand such Acts had been passed, resulting in the diminution of the area of common land by upwards of 7,175,000 acres. The current of popular opinion ran strongly in favour of such inclosures, as it was thought absolutely necessary to bring as much of the land under cultivation as possible. But the good results of such a course were more than counterbalanced by one evil effect—the practical extinction of the class of small yeomen.

In place of special Acts, a General Inclosure Act was passed in 1845, and by 1869 the acreage of inclosures under its operation was 614,800, of which only 4,000 acres had been set aside for public purposes. But a few years earlier, about 1864, a gradual change in public opinion had already begun to set in. Thoughtful people saw that the commons near towns were only inclosed for building purposes and never for cultivation, while as open spaces for recreation they were becoming invaluable. They also saw that in rural districts it mattered little whether a few more acres of barren soil that would only bear a stunted crop were added to the cultivated area, when for well-nigh twenty years Free Trade had made us independent of the home supply of corn. At the same time the rights attaching to commons in populous districts were getting to be disused, and the manor courts, once regularly attended, were rarely, if ever, held. The lords of the manor, near London and elsewhere, now saw their opportunity. Perceiving that it was becoming unpopular to use the Parliament of the day as an engine for inclosure, they bethought themselves of the ancient Statute of Merton, and of the use it could be put to now that the rights of common were falling into desuetude.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Metropolitan Commons in 1865 was fully against the inclosure system. While recognising that the commoners' rights were rarely exercised, it maintained that all future inclosures would only be made for building purposes; and as the value of all such commons as recreation grounds was enormous, recommended that the Statute of Merton should be repealed. But the Parliament of the day willed otherwise, and for nearly thirty years longer the Statute

was made good use of by the lords of the manor. The Report so adverse to their interests was spark to the tinder, and inclosures on the commons round London proceeded apace.

These high-handed actions led to the formation of the Commons Preservation Society, in the autumn of the year 1865, at the instance of Mr. P. H. Lawrence. With a few short breaks Mr. Shaw-Lefevre has continued its chairman down to the present time, and has taken a large share in its proceedings. Its members soon had plenty of good work to do. In a brief notice like this, we can give the merest *résumé* of the adventures into which these defenders of public rights were led, and of their battles, nearly always successful, in the law courts.

In the neighbourhood of London, Hampstead Heath was one of the first open spaces to suffer from inclosure. This was one of those commons where the ancient rights of litter-cutting and pasturage had fallen into disuse. But a suit was commenced against the lord of the manor, Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, in the name of Mr. Gurney Hoare, an influential commoner, on behalf of other copyholders. This suit was never brought to a termination owing to the death of Sir Thomas Wilson, but a compromise was effected with his successor, and the Heath was saved. The circumstances of the noble addition of Parliament Hill and Fields, but a few years since, are also detailed.

We must pass over the rescue of Berkhampstead Common from the encroachments of Lord Brownlow, and refer our readers to the thrilling narrative of Mr. Augustus Smith's spirited action, in which our author had a share, of organising a party of men and sending them down from London to Berkhampstead, at the dead of night, to break down the double row of fences which Lord Brownlow had erected, at the cost of £1,000, right across the common, enclosing 434 acres.

Fortune favoured the Commons Society in their resistance of encroachments on, and in the ultimate preservation of, several other open spaces near and far from London. Plumstead and Tooting Commons and Bostall Heath, Wimbledon Common, Ashdown Forest and Malvern Hills, Coulsdon, Dartford and Wigley Commons, all remain in their primitive state; but the trisected and mangled common of Wandsworth is but a brand plucked from the burning.

From its large area, from the length of time during which the lawsuit dragged on that involved its fortunes as an open space, and from its wonderful natural beauty, Epping Forest stands out in the foreground of the canvas upon which we mentally depict the circle of waste grounds that girdle our great metropolis. As we gaze in the bright blue sky of May, upon its rolling undulations covered with an unbroken stretch of greenery, save where the soft white masses of hawthorn show out in bold relief, it is hard to comprehend the Philistine spirit of those lords of the manors who strove to work its ruin thirty years ago. Together with Hainault Forest, the scene of Mr. Walter Besant's novel,

All in a Garden Fair, it formed the last remnant of the great Forest of Waltham. Hainault was disafforested in the year 1851, and Epping Forest was in a fair way of sharing its fate when Mr. Maitland, rector of the parish and lord of the manor of Loughton, inclosed 1,300 acres at one swoop. Hostilities commenced with the imprisonment of a labouring man named Willingale, and the death of his son in prison, from cold caught therein. The only offence for which they were consigned to gaol was that of following the time-honoured custom of lopping the trees for firewood, nothing daunted by the fact of the inclosure. On his release from prison Willingale was induced to sue the lord of the manor, funds being provided him for the purpose. Lord Romilly overruled the preliminary objection of the defendant, thus approving the legality of the custom of lopping the trees. Though Willingale never lived to see his suit come on for hearing, his action paved the way for the great suit against the encroachments of the lords of the manors. In this the Corporation of the City of London was persuaded to act as plaintiff in respect of property which they fortunately held at Little Ilford, in Wanstead Manor, one of the nineteen manors of which the forest was made up.

The suit was practically conducted against the defendants by Mr. (now Sir) Robert Hunter, on behalf of the city solicitor, owing to his having been employed in all the great common cases that had been brought to a successful issue. The lords of the manors hoped to be able to prove that the commoners of each manor were confined to it alone, and had no rights over the whole forest, or over the wastes of other manors. In this way each lord of the manor would have been able to buy up the rights of his own commoners, and thus piecemeal inclosure would have been effected with little difficulty. But the researches of Mr. Hunter brought to light the fact that the forest was but one great waste, over which the commoners of every one of the nineteen manors comprising it had the right of turning out their cattle, without being forced to confine them to particular districts. The suit extended over three years, and at the end of that time, in 1874, Sir George Jessel gave judgment in favour of the plaintiff on every point, the result being that the lords of the manor were forced to disgorge 3,000 acres—an area equal in size to that to which the forest had already been reduced—in other words, the forest was enlarged so as to consist of 6,000 acres.

A Royal Commission was appointed to report on Epping Forest at the same time as the trial was being carried on, but like too many other Royal Commissions, it temporised. The cause of the commoners would have fared badly in Parliament, too, had it not been for the valiant efforts of Mr. Henry Fawcett, Mr. Cowper-Temple, and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre; but in 1878 a Bill was finally passed, vesting the City Corporation, who had already bought up a considerable number of the interests of the lords of manors, with the future control and management of Epping Forest. To cut a long story short:—

"The Forest was thrown open to the public by the Queen in person at High Beech, in the presence of a great assemblage of persons, on May 6th, 1882. Restitution was thus made, by the Sovereign, of land which in very ancient times had probably been taken from the folk-land for the purpose of a Royal Forest, and the Forest was dedicated for ever to the use and enjoyment of the public."

But not every country-side is favoured with beechen forest and heathery common. The road-side waste, gay with wild flowers and patches of furze, is often the only playground of the village children. Of such wastes the law is decidedly against inclosure, yet the lords of manors have oftentimes contrived to absorb them. In 1867, the late Lord Salisbury inclosed all the road-side strips in the neighbourhood of Hatfield. Lord Cowper, who owned adjoining land, sought the advice of the Commons Society, and, following the example of Mr. Augustus Smith, at Berkhampstead—

"collected a large body of tenants and labourers, who, under his personal superintendence, removed the whole of the fences in the night and early morning. Having effected this, he sent a servant on horseback to Hatfield with a letter, informing Lord Salisbury of what had been done, and of his reasons for doing it."

The limits assigned us forbid of our dwelling on the more recent victories of the Commons Preservation Society, and of the virtual repeal of the Statute of Merton, which originated, the opposition of the present Lord Salisbury notwithstanding, in the House of Lords.

For an account of the lengthy, spirited, and finally successful, struggle on the part of the Commons Society for the rescue of the Banstead Commons, our readers must refer to the volume itself. The New Forest case, in which the encroachments of the War Office were so triumphantly thwarted, is fresh in all our memories. It is a little disappointing to Selbornians, however, to find in this book no allusion to the efforts of our own Society in the cause of commons and open spaces in general, and of the New Forest in particular. Unquestionably many members of the Selborne Society are members of the Commons Society also, but the former as a body had a distinct share in resisting the arrogant attempts of the War Office to create Volunteer Ranges in the New Forest.

Bating this single omission, nothing could be more complete or thorough than this record of a battle for public rights. In addition to the maps and excellent index, there are several valuable tables showing at a glance what commons and forests have been placed under regulations, and are secured to the public for ever, and how many are still open to the attacks of the ever-watchful encroacher and land-grabber. This leads us to conclude with a note of warning. Let no one imagine that the battle is over. It is still in the power of lords of manors, as Mr. Shaw-Lefevre tells us, to buy up the rights of commoners, and thus, if left to themselves, to annihilate an open space as such. To be ever on the alert against such insidious attacks,

to investigate every attempted inclosure, no matter how trifling, must be our work, till land-filching be no more heard of, and desecration of public rights be a thing of the past.

ARCHIBALD CLARKE.

IMITATIVE FACULTY IN BIRDS.

FOR many winters past I have been in the habit of feeding, as liberally as possible, the birds that come the whole year through to my little garden. Those dreadful plagues, the cats, are, so far as it can anyhow be done, fenced off by wires with climbing roses trained over them. We thus have the birds in large numbers coming to feed and seeming to feel quite at home. Robins build in the garden in boxes put up for them, and rear their interesting little young ones, if I can manage to keep the robinets from wandering to see the world too soon. They cannot fly far, or well, so soon as the young sparrows, who may be seen in pleasant family groups, fluttering their wings to be fed by their parents, but quite able, as soon as they get out of the nest, to fly and take care of themselves in every way.

But the robinets are apt to wander into the next gardens, or on to the towing-path, where the cats soon make an end of them. Two or three years ago a pair of robins began to build a nest, very early, in one of these boxes. A spell of very wet and cold weather came on, when the nest was nearly finished, whereupon the birds ceased building; but a month after they began a *second* nest, in another box, and being interrupted by ivy-cutting all around them, they went off and built a *third* nest on the top of the wall. But before they had laid an egg the summer migrants came over, and one of them laid two eggs in the nest, whereupon the robins forsook their nest and built elsewhere a fourth nest, where they quietly reared their brood.

But the most interesting of the birds are the tits. For their especial behoof we tie up at the end of long strings pieces of fat, half-picked bones, and bread, which hang, often tossed wildly about by the winds, under the spreading branches of an old apple tree. To these pieces three or four kinds of tits come, and cling with the greatest ease, usually head downwards, where they are spun round, and tossed about in all directions, by the gales. It is to everybody a very interesting sight to see them.

Now the sparrows, which are with us, as everywhere, the most numerous of our winter birds, used to sit, perched on the rose-bushes, when they had eaten all their own crumbs, watching with much care, and apparent envy, the tits feasting on the swinging pieces of fat or bread. At length one adventur-

ous sparrow made a flying leap at the swinging bread; and after several failures, just managed at last to hang on by his *beak* long enough to pull off a piece, wherewith he would fly off, followed by a dozen of his comrades, one of which usually managed to get it from the original procurer before he had time to eat it himself. This method went on for awhile increasing, with frequent angry chatterings by the robbed tits. By-and-by, however, one carefully observant sparrow just succeeded in perching on the top of a large piece of bread, and hung there feeding, though with difficulty. Others soon imitated the adventurer; and though they often fell off, yet they are getting now, I see, to manage to fasten their claws somehow to the twine; thus I am now looking forward to see what will happen with them next winter.

All this bird-feeding is watched with great interest by three little canaries, whose cages hang in a window overlooking the feeding-place; and, more especially, by a dear little red-poll, which stands on the kitchen window-sill, just inside the apple-tree, and whose dainty little feet, dark, like a lady's hand in black kid gloves, cling to the nearest wires in his astonishment at watching what is going on outside.

In very hard weather, when the rooks are sorely pressed to find any food, a few of them come to perch on a neighbouring tree, and sail frequently over the garden. After much reconnoitring, one of them will make a swoop upon the very small grass-plot—so small that the bird can hardly find room to perch—and carry off in his claws a piece of bread or meat, to consume at his leisure on the top of the tree or elsewhere.

W. J. C. Miller.

The Paragon, Richmond.

GOLFERS AND COMMON LAND.

THE sudden rise in the popularity of golf near London is leading to unlooked-for developments. While the game was confined to private land, or public land in private use, its introduction into a neighbourhood was the concern only of its votaries. An open-air game, of not too boisterous a character, requiring some skill in its pursuit, and free from the blighting gambling mania, is certain of sympathisers among all lovers of out-door exercise. Within such limits its influence is only healthy, but it is different when golf is introduced on to commons, heaths, or other public open spaces. Some amount of change has to be made to adapt the locality to the desired purpose, and the ground so occupied is devoted to the use of the few (and in these cases wealthy people), as against that of the public generally; and if the land is of limited extent, the few

enjoy it to the detriment of the many. In such spaces as Sudbrook Park, and the Old Deer Park in the west, which are almost entirely pasturage land in private occupation, though Crown property, the public are in no ways prejudiced.

But the matter is placed on a different footing in such cases as Blackheath and Wimbledon Common, on both of which large clubs use public ground. A blow from the small solid ball used, driven with all the force of which athletes are capable, may produce serious, if not fatal, results, and the Blackheath clubs pay no inconsiderable toll to the local authorities in payment for broken glass and burners in the wayside lamps. That numerous accidents do not occur is due to the sympathy which is felt for most forms of sport, the public preferring to avoid such spots rather than risk injury. This exclusive use of open spaces is unjust to the public as a whole. Take the case of Wimbledon Common. The beautiful ravines which run down to Beverly Brook, being swept by the bullets of riflemen practising at the butts, are inaccessible spots. By some influence the open plateau above has been given over to golfers, so that between the two a large moiety of the common has been wrested from general use. It may freely be conceded that there is little risk of injury to the onlooker intent on watching the game and evading the balls. But our commons and heaths are the resort of classes not devoted to playing and watching games of skill. To the student of nature, the contemplative abstracted man, as well as to the nervous and shortsighted, the occupancy of the ground by golfers is a direct loss. The public ways, both in town and country, are scourged by the cyclist, and now the commons are being given over to the golfer! Will there shortly be one spot outside his own garden —if he is fortunate enough to possess one —where the quiet man of gentle tastes can enjoy his walks without needless excursions and alarms?

One of the latest invasions of the golfer has led to this protest. Sheen Common is a furze and bracken-covered, roughly triangular piece of land, of limited extent, lying between Richmond Hill and East Sheen, with its base against the walls of the park. At its apex are the remains of an avenue of stately elms. Enclosed on all sides by orchards or the park, no roads for wheeled traffic cross it, or even impinge on it. Footpaths traverse it in all directions, across and around, winding among the furze and bracken, making it an ideal resort for children and the lovers of quiet. Gently sloping upwards towards the park, to which a broad grassy road leads—formerly the approach of royalty when Richmond was really a royal borough—its upper parts command an extensive view, sweeping over the Thames Valley to Harrow and beyond.

Some years ago the manorial rights passed into the hands of a syndicate of gentlemen living at Sheen. To recover the cost of the transfer, considerable mutilation of the surface, due

to the sale of sand, gravel and turf, has from time to time taken place. For some years also a corps of rifle volunteers has used the common for target practice, a huge and hideous brick screen covering the park beyond from stray bullets. The greater part of this lofty buttressed wall was blown down early in the year. It is not to be rebuilt, owing to the short term of the unexpired lease. Recurring but ineffectual protests have been made against these defacements, which, however, much as they spoil its beauty, have not materially interfered with the use of the common. The syndicate in question has just taken steps which are complained of as a destruction of the natural features of the common, and the possession of its surface by a limited and presumably rich class, to the danger and exclusion of people generally. A large part of the furze-covered surface has been burnt off, perhaps accidentally, but quite intentionally wide avenues have been stripped of all undergrowths, to make "drives" for the golfers. The charm of Sheen Common has been its tangled and matted furze bracken, blackthorn, honeysuckle, and other lowly bush growth. Much of this has been ruthlessly swept away, and as the club increases, it is feared the rest is doomed. This mutilation of the common is quite enough to call forth a strong protest from the public, which has claims to the free and unimpeded use of its surface. But in addition to this, streams of golfers drive balls with almost the force of bullets across the paths which cross the common, and thus practically close a part to the large number of persons using it. It is a question whether this is not an infringement of the rights of the public.

Fortunately, though Sheen Common is outside the limits of Richmond, its public-spirited corporation have by a unanimous resolution resolved to take what steps are possible to preserve its amenities. A deputation of the local Branch of the Selborne Society has waited upon the managers of the common, who have promised that the destruction of the undergrowth should be stopped; they have also stated that play would not be permitted during the summer, and that the players would be required to play with a strict regard to the safety of the public using the common. They also expressed their willingness to treat with the Barnes Local Board for the transfer of the common to that body. It is well known that only a few hundred pounds (£550) remain unpaid of the purchase-money, so that the question of expense is only of relatively small account. After a short but sharp struggle, through the activity of the Richmond Branch and the local press, notably the *Richmond and Twickenham Times*, and with the aid of the metropolitan press and the courtesy of the managers, it is hoped that matters are in train for a settlement satisfactory to both sides and the public.

Kew. JOHN ALLEN.

DEFOE ON THE MIGRATION OF SWALLOWS.

NOW that we are looking for the return of the swallows, the following extract from Defoe's *Tour through the Eastern Counties of England in 1722*, may be interesting. Writing of Southwold, in Suffolk, he says:—"At this town in particular, and so at all the towns on this coast, from Orfordness to Yarmouth, is the ordinary place where our summer friends the swallows first land when they come to visit us; and here they may be said to embark for their return, when they go back into warmer climates; and the following remarks may be both instructing as well as diverting. I was some years before at this place, at the latter end of the year, viz., about the beginning of October, and lodging in a house that looked into the churchyard, I observed in the evening, an unusual multitude of birds sitting on the leads of the church. Curiosity led me to go nearer to see what they were, and I found they were all swallows; that there was such an infinite number that they covered the whole roof of the church and of several houses near, and perhaps might of more houses which I did not see. This led me to inquire of a grave gentleman, whom I saw near me, what the meaning was of such a prodigious multitude of swallows sitting there. 'Oh, sir,' says he, 'you may see the reason; the wind is off sea.' I did not seem fully informed by that expression, so he goes on: 'I perceive, sir, you are a stranger to it; you must then understand first, that this is the season of the year when the swallows, their food here failing, begin to leave us, and return to the country, whereever it be, from whence I suppose they came; and this being nearest to the coast of Holland, they come here to embark; and now, sir,' says he, 'the weather being too calm or the wind contrary, they are waiting for a gale, for they are all windbound.'

"This was more evident to me, when in the morning I found the wind had come about to the north-west in the night, and there was not one swallow to be seen of near a million, which I believe was there the night before.

"How those creatures know that this part of the island of Great Britain is the way to their home, or the way that they are to go; that this very point is the nearest cut over, or even that the nearest cut is best for them, we must leave to the naturalists to determine, who insist upon it that brutes cannot think.

"Certain it is that the swallows neither come hither for warm weather nor retire from cold; the thing is of quite another nature. They, like the shoals of fish in the sea, pursue their prey; they are a voracious creature, they feed flying; their food is found in the air, viz., the insects, of which in our summer evenings, in damp and moist places, the air is full. They come hither in the summer because our air is fuller of fogs and damps

than in other countries, and for that reason feeds great quantities of insects. If the air be hot and dry the gnats die of themselves, and even the swallows will be found famished for want, and fall down dead out of the air, their food being taken from them. In like manner, when cold weather comes in the insects all die, and then of necessity the swallows quit us, and follow their food wherever they go. This they do in the manner I have mentioned above, for sometimes they are seen to go off in vast flights like a cloud. And sometimes again, when the wind grows fair, they go away a few and a few as they come, not staying at all upon the coast.

"This passing and re-passing of the swallows is observed nowhere so much, that I have heard of, or in but few other places, except on the eastern coast, namely, from above Harwich to the east point of Norfolk, called Winterton Ness, North, which is all right against Holland."

Gilbert White's letters on migration were written over fifty years later.

R. Marshman Wattson.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

Our anxiety to do justice to some of the books on our shelf by noticing them at length, seems likely to result in their not being noticed at all. In order to avoid this undesirable state of things, we propose to give a brief account of these, reserving to ourselves the right of returning to them at greater length, should the demands upon our space become less exacting than they are at the present time.

At the head of our list we must place a beautiful volume which comes to us from Messrs. Harper Brothers, New York. It is called *Sharp Eyes*, a title which is amplified into "A Rambler's Calendar of fifty-two weeks among insects, birds, and flowers." The author, Mr. William Hamilton Gibson, has, we observe, published other volumes of the same kind, and if they are in any way equal to this, it is to be regretted that they are little, if at all, known in England. It is no small tribute to the literary part of the book to say that it is as attractive in its way as are the charming illustrations which adorn almost every page; such a combination of artist and observer—for Mr. Gibson is his own illustrator—is rare indeed, especially as a dainty humour finds expression both by pen and pencil. The behaviour of seeds and seedlings, the ways of butterflies and beetles, the footprints of beasts in the snow, the materials of birds' nests and the nature of their songs—these and numerous other subjects, treated in the most delightful manner possible, make up one of the most charming books we ever remember to have seen. We do not know its price, but fear it must be somewhat expensive; still, Selbornians are by no means confined to the less moneyed classes, and we are sure that no one who can afford it will regret the outlay.

Mr. Richard Heath's volume on *The English Peasant* (T. Fisher Unwin, 4s. 6d.), brings us face to face with a very different class of observations from those which employ Mr. Gibson's facile pen. "The proper"—albeit at times depressing—"study of mankind" being man, Mr. Heath gives us a series of object-lessons which make up an interesting book. Their value, however, is somewhat depreciated by the fact that they represent periods varying from 1870 to 1884, and largely the first five of these years. Things have moved rapidly during the last twenty-five years, and a good many changes, not always for the

better, have taken place in the life of the country labourer. The lives of Cobbett, Clare, and Wm. Huntington might, we think, have been spared. The picture of rural life which Mr. Heath draws is largely, though not entirely, wanting in the pastoral and idyllic scenes with which a residence in the country used to be associated; but there is plenty of human interest, and the book is by no means dull. Amusing and, so far as we know, original anecdotes enliven its pages, such as that of the Kentish boy who wished he was "a gentleman." "What would you do?" he was asked. "Sit in front of the fire and eat bulls'-eyes," was the reply. There is a certain amount of the *odium theologicum* which might be eliminated in a future edition, should the work reach one, and a little more exactness in detail would improve it. We can assure him that "the Jesuits" have neither orphanages nor "nunneries" in the Weald of Sussex, nor does any "Jesuit saint" bear the name "Alphegius."

Mr. Heath writes for the elders, but Dr. Gordon-Stables appeals to the young in his handsome volume *Sable and White*, "the Autobiography of a Show Dog," (Jarrold & Sons, 3s. 6d.)—made the more attractive by Mr. Harrison Weir's excellent illustrations. Stories of this kind have long been popular with children: "Bob, the Spotted Terrier," was among the earliest of our friends, and so was "Puss and the Captain," also illustrated, unless we are mistaken, by Mr. Harrison Weir. "Luath," the narrator, is certainly a collie of culture; he quotes Burns, Moore, Gray, and other poets, and occasionally—but only occasionally—indulges in improving reflections. The story, however, is full of interest, and Dr. Gordon-Stables does not allow it to lose in the telling. This beautifully printed book is just the thing for a birthday present for a boy of ten or thereabouts—and this is not an unsupported opinion, for it is endorsed by the youngster to whom we have handed our copy.

The date of publication prevented us from recommending the first instalment of *The Country Month by Month* (paper, 1s.; cloth, 2s) in time for perusal during March—the month to which it refers; but if the well-known Latin adage *ex uno disce omnes* is to be believed, our recommendation will apply equally to later volumes. Mrs. Owen—the editor of the "Son of the Marshes"—and Professor Boulger have collaborated with great success, and have brought out a volume charming in appearance (for which we presume the publishers, Messrs. Bliss, Sands, & Foster, are to be thanked), literary in style, and accurate in statement. Many books of this kind have appeared from time to time, but we know none which so well deserves credit for being "up to date" as this pretty little volume. Our critical eye rests on only one slip, and that is open to explanation; it is on p. 50, where "charlock and the wild mustard plant"—usually considered as names for one and the same thing—are spoken of as though they were distinct. There is some well-chosen poetry, but not too much of it, in honour of the daffodil. We should have been glad to see Miss Tynan's "Golden Lilies" laid under contribution:

> "O daffodils all aflame,
> I know from whence ye came,
> To warm March with your blaze:
> As Gabriel went a-winging
> Down pleasant country ways,
> He heard your trumpets ringing."

We shall await with interest the further volumes of this series.

The Voices of the Stars, by the Rev. James E. Walker, M.A. (Elliot Stock), is, to quote Mr. Walker's own words, "a book of scientific facts and of mystical correspondences between the natural and supernatural." These "mystical correspondences" are beyond the scope of NATURE NOTES, and we confine our remarks to the scientific part of the book. Mr. Walker has done his work well. He takes in hand light, the sun, the earth, and each of the planets, and in concise and intelligible diction he places before his reader the most salient points of information on each of these subjects. It is a book for students, but somewhat beyond a mere beginner of astronomy. References are given to the best authors of the day in verification of the scientific statements, and not the least valuable parts of the book are the copious footnotes. We might take exception to the title, for the book deals not with the stars but with the solar system only. This, however, if a blemish, is a pardonable one.

SELBORNIANA.

The late Sir Harry Verney (pp. 55.)—In the death of Sir H. Verney, the "Selborne Society" has not only lost its oldest member in years, but also one of its best friends. Such was his love of birds and animals, that when he engaged the services of his game preservers, he would himself always give definite instructions that none were to be destroyed under any circumstances: and although I have reason to believe hawks and jays, which were very numerous, were sometimes destroyed, he was kept in ignorance about it. Magpies were so plentiful that the tenant farmers complained, but nevertheless, not one was on any account to be destroyed, his answer being that the good derived from those birds, as well as all others, more than compensated for any harm they may have done. Claydon is noted for its rookeries, and sometimes in the breeding season the farmers and others would meet for a day's rook shooting, but they never dared to do so unless Sir Harry was away from home. Squirrels abounded, as they do now everywhere on the estate, so tame as to come close up to you when standing looking at them. On a visit to Claydon House in October last, I counted fourteen of these nimble little animals within a radius of a few yards. I remember when going to and fro from school we were always instructed by him never to touch them, or molest the birds by throwing, or in any other way injuring them, and we knew the degradation sure to follow at school if we ignored the command. Nor were these restrictions confined to birds and animals, the trees and plants were likewise looked after. A tenant was not able to cut down a tree or injure it by cutting and lopping without asking permission. Yet I may say no man ever won the respect of his tenants or of the people for miles round more than he had. Every one, man and child, loved him and his manners, for all knew he took every means which lay in his power to carry out his fondness for the preservation of every living thing, which, he said, was sent by God for man's enjoyment.

JAMES E. WHITING.

The Protection of Birds.—The Annual Meeting of the Society for the Protection of Birds took place on Feb. 22, at 105, Jermyn Street. Mr. E. H. Bayley, M.P., presided, and there was a large attendance. In opening the proceedings, the chairman said that the Society aimed at preventing the destruction of beautiful and useful birds by influencing public opinion, and, if possible, by promoting legislation. He referred to the numerous enemies which birds had to contend against, and insisted on the necessity of putting a stop to the wholesale catching and killing of birds for purposes of sale, or for so-called sport. As an example of the latter abuse he instanced a case which had been brought under his notice, of a man who went down to Devonshire from London, and in a very short time destroyed all the kingfishers on a certain stream. Mrs. Phillips moved the adoption of the Report, from which we are glad to learn that the total number of members had increased from 5,200 to 9,159. The associates numbered 483, of whom 152 were branch secretaries. There was urgent need for all who loved birds to bestir themselves in disseminating such knowledge of their beauty and usefulness, and such reverence for their Creator as should impel the now passive majority to combine for protection of bird-life against the vanity and greed of a selfish minority. Colonel Coulson seconded the resolution, which was supported by Professor Newton, and carried unanimously. Sir Edward Grey, M.P., and other speakers also addressed the meeting. We are glad to find in the Report, which contains much interesting matter, a kindly reference to NATURE NOTES.

The Selborne Field Club.—As was announced last month, a Central Field Club has been formed in connection with the Selborne Society, open to all members on payment of one shilling per annum. An admirable programme has been arranged for Saturday afternoon excursions to places near London, at which short papers will be read, and tea will be provided. The arrangements for April will be found on p. 80. Communications should be addressed to T. A. Dymes, Esq., 16, Lancaster Road, West Kensington Park, W., who will supply all information.

Band of Mercy.—A Band of Mercy has been in existence for the last ten years in the parish of St. George, Old Brentford. It was commenced in February, 1884, by the late Rev. Percy Myles, then curate of the parish. The members

met once a month, when they learnt Band of Mercy songs, were addressed on the subject of kindness to animals, and were generally told about the habits of some animal or insect, which they chose at the previous meeting. While the address was being given, the girls did knitting or needlework, and the boys cut out pictures and coloured them for scrap-books, which, together with the work, were sent to one of the children's hospitals. Two years ago this Band of Mercy was joined to the juvenile branch of the C.E.T.S., and the meetings are held fortnightly, the members still continuing their work, which now goes to the Church of England Homes for Waifs and Strays. During the winter an occasional lecture with lantern views is given, generally by some one from the R.S.P.C.A., the children being encouraged by prizes to write an account of any special lecture or address. Members are admitted by the vicar at a service in church once a quarter, when they receive the card of membership. The name of the Band is the "Help," so called from the dog who collected for the South Eastern Railway Orphanage.

L. A. Leach.

[We are glad to learn that this Band of Mercy has been so long in existence. It seems to us, however, that such Bands should not be so intimately associated with any special form of belief as appears to be the case at Brentford.—Ed. *N.N.*]

"Ospreys" in High Places.—I was shown by my dressmaker, a day or two before the late Drawing-room, a court dress and train in which she evidently took much pride, but from which I turned away with strong disgust. The trimming consisted of groups of egrets' feathers, dyed crimson to match the silk. I suppose there were about five of these groups down each side of the petticoat. I hardly think it can be urged with any probability that the order for this trimming was given in ignorance of the cruel wrong inflicted on a race of beautiful harmless birds. So much has been said and published on the subject, that few, surely, amongst the more educated classes can affirm with truth that they follow the fashion unawares. I do not hesitate to say that, as a rule, women are, where "dress" is concerned, absolutely callous and indifferent to everything but fashion. I have seen and known a great deal of this, and my verdict is not too severe. Plead as you may for the birds, they will give you a stony stare and answer with the emptiest arguments. Some say the birds would be killed anyhow, and *they* may as well wear them as any one else; or they declare that the feathers are not egrets' at all, or if they are, that the numbers sacrificed are enormously exaggerated. They will say anything rather than confess that to kill birds to wear on their heads is cruel, or promise to discontinue doing so These are my unimaginative sisters—no small class, I fear. There are others who will ask "if they may not just wear out their old egret?" or—and this, at least, is honest - refuse point blank to give it up. Others, again (like your correspondent at p. 55), want to begin at the wrong end by attempting to stop the supply—an idle dream, I fear, so long as the demand continues. Few, indeed, act like the upper housemaid I knew, who on being told the reason why she was asked to give up the egret in her Sunday bonnet, showed her kind heart by taking it out at once. She said, very simply, that she had never had an idea that such suffering was caused by the obtaining of the feathers of any bird. I believe the bunch of lilac and heartsease which replaced that plume gave far more pleasure to the wearer than ever the egret had done; and the little episode ended by the Society for the Protection of Birds receiving a new member. I confess, however, that I see little hope for our cause in any further appeal to the merciful feelings of the majority of women; they are hopelessly enslaved by fashion—blinded by its dictates.

E. V. B.

[Another valued correspondent sends us the following paragraph from *The Poultry Journal* for March 9:—

"Lovers of birds are grieving over the fact, announced in the *Court Circular*, that the trimming of the Princess of Wales' court train, worn at Tuesday's Drawing-room, included ospreys, the beautiful crested plumes which are so barbarously torn from the parent birds in the nesting season. The ospreys are often so seriously injured that they slowly and lingeringly die in sight of the nests where

the young birds, but half fledged, are crying to them for food. It is impossible that the Princess of Wales can be aware of this, for Her Royal Highness is one of the gentlest and kindest-hearted of human beings."—ED. *N.N.*]

A New Outrage!—I am distressed to see that a new fashion has arisen which may mean destruction to eagles. A fortnight ago, at a shop in New Bond Street, I saw several fans made of eagle feathers, and this week I have seen others at a shop in Piccadilly. They told me in the shop that the fans come from Vienna. They are labelled "great novelties," and therefore no doubt will sell. Is there no way of stopping what may mean extinction to these glorious birds?

8, *Pelham Crescent, S.W.* K. A. WHITMORE.

For the Protection of Birds.—According to the *Lanterne*, as quoted by the *Standard's* Paris correspondent, a congress of a novel description is shortly to be held in Paris. All over the Continent it seems that the wholesale destruction of the small insect-eating birds, by nets, traps, and birds'-nesting, has done great damage to agriculture, and especially in orchards and vineyards. Therefore, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the solicitation of leading agriculturists, has entered into negotiations for the meeting of an International Congress, to devise measures for the protection of insectivorous birds. Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Russia, Roumania, and Greece have expressed their willingness to attend. Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy have intimated that they are bound by international treaties for the protection of birds, but that if the new scheme did not materially clash with their own they would readily accept it.—*Westminster Gazette*, *March* 14.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Notes from Florida.—A friend has sent me your issue for December, 1893. Perhaps you would like some more Florida notes. Did your correspondent, I wonder, find the "orange dog" chrysalis? it is a wonderful example of mimicry, being a perfect copy of the broken bit left when a twig is snapped off, having an irregular, splintered-looking end. Altogether, with the repulsive looking caterpillar, which looks like the dropping from a large bird, and has an evil and unholy smell, and the twig mimicry in the chrysalis, *Papilio cresphontes* should be well protected. We are about one hundred miles from Oakland, and on the Gulf of Mexico, so we have land and water fauna and flora. Our three commonest—or rather most conspicuous—birds are the blue jay, the cardinal grosbeak and the mocking bird. Everyone has heard stories of the latter, and really its powers of imitation are superb. I have heard at different times the whip-poor-will—which, by the way, calls "chuck willow willow"—a clucking hen, and even an air which my children had been singing at their play. Sometimes at night in the nesting season a mocker will practise all he knows, and then you do not like to go to bed. One solo lasted over an hour, and included the woodpeckers' pairing sound (an inconceivably rapid tapping), the martin's love note, a hunter whistling his dog, the dog yelping, besides his own exquisite song. The jay is a handsome, noisy, impudent fowl, with a comic habit of shouting "we—e—e did it! we—e—e did it!" The grosbeak, or red bird, is a beauty—bright crimson with black cheek patches. His wife is as dainty-looking a little thing as the most exacting could ask. In sheeny quaker dress, she looks a perfect little lady among birds, with her quiet, retiring ways. Their common note is "chip;" the cock also calls "pedro, pedro," and both can sing very prettily. All these three are easily tamed to come up for crumbs. Another common bird is the butcher bird, or great grey shrike. He sings "music, music" in the gentlest voice—belied by his cruel black eye. Anything he can catch he impales on thorns and leaves to die. A friend assures me it is done "for fun" merely, and the bird fairly dances to see them writhe. I thought our "rabbit" was a hare (*Lepus americanus*) and not a burrower, but am told it often lives in gopher holes, although I have never found it, night or day, anywhere except in the open. I

scared it scuds to a palmetto clump, where it is safe. My experience confirms your correspondent as to the scarcity of earthworms ; but I fear that the author of the assertion as to cats refusing fish wanted to trade a feline with him. I *have* known of such a thing ; but that was because the puss in question had already packed enough for two cats into one cat skin, and found her fur jacket tight.

Clearwater Harbour, Florida. JOHN RUSSELL DAVIES.

Sagacity of a Vole.—When I was fishing last summer on the Avon I was much struck with the sagacity of a water-rat, or vole, as I believe they are rightly called. One afternoon I happened to be standing perfectly quiet on the bank, when I noticed a vole swimming towards me with a large apple in its mouth, and making straight for a hole in the exposed roots of an alder tree. When the small creature arrived at its destination the apple, alas ! was found too large to get into the opening. First it was pushed and then pulled, but all to no purpose, till, getting tired of this, a happy thought seemed to strike the vole, for taking the apple again in its mouth, it swam quickly up stream for some little distance, let it go, bit a piece off and swam quickly back to its nest and disappeared. But the prize was not intended to be abandoned, for the creature soon reappeared, picked up the apple, which had floated past the hole, and swam again with it up stream, biting a piece off as before and again disappearing. This happened four times, till only a small bit of apple remained, which was abandoned. Had the animal not taken it each time up stream, the prize would probably have been lost, as the current, which was in that part rather strong, would have carried it over a small waterfall in the time taken by the vole going into its nest.

Bath. BEATRICE BRETTINGHAM.

Unexpected Traits in Birds (p. 29).—I have observed some similar traits in my canary. I have often watched him take a piece of groundsel up to a perch and hold it down with his foot, so as to eat it comfortably. I have had him about three and a-half years. He is often allowed to come out of his cage. One day, the hook on which his cage is hung came out of the wall, and the cage fell to the ground. He was not hurt, and directly I picked him up he began to ask, with loud chirps of a peculiar sort, what had happened. I am quite sure he has a language, for he makes use of different sorts of chirps on different occasions. For instance, if I go into the room where he lives, with a piece of chickweed or other green food in my hand, he utters loud notes of pleasure ; or if one of his perches falls down he will call till it is put up again, and the same in the evening when he wants his cover put on for the night. He has a very fine voice, and often sings so loudly as to have to be covered, and when he sees me coming towards him with the cover he quite screams with anger. He tries, in the summer time, to imitate the songs of the wild birds. I have often heard him practising a little phrase quite softly to himself, till he thinks he has got it right. He is continually adding a few fresh notes to his vocabulary. We are extremely fond of one another, and if anyone else cleans his cage, he notices it directly, and asks why ; or if I leave his cage on the table and go out of the room, he calls loudly to be hung up again, and he does not like to have the door of the room left open for long.

Hampstead, N. W. MARY GEDDES.

Weather Lore—On p. 35 you mention a North Bucks rhyme which you say you have not met with in print. You can find it, with a slight variation, in *The Lady Overseer, a Pamphlet, with Notes on Country Life, Natural History, and Women's Rights*, by a "Female Freeholder, Farmer, and late Parish Officer," published at Leamington, 1874. The authoress (now dead) was a native of, and resident in, South Northamptonshire, and gives the rhyme thus :—

> "Sow your beans on David and Chad,
> If the weather be good, or the weather be bad ;
> If you don't sow them before Benedic,
> You had better, I ween, have them all in the rick."

My copy of the pamphlet was presented to me by the authoress, a really clever though perhaps slightly eccentric lady, who in early life was a frequent visitor, with her father (an intimate friend of Charles Waterton), at Walton Hall. Her

early acquaintance with, and admiration for, the "Wanderer," a great preserver (in two senses) of birds, gives anything this lady wrote a claim upon the attention of the readers of NATURE NOTES.

To revert to the rhyme. I have often heard an old Oxfordshire farmer, who died recently, give it in the following abbreviated form:—

"Betwixt David and Chad
Put in your beans, weather good or bad."

His fixed idea was that (as he has often explained) David came on "the fust o' the month, and Chad on the last." I know St. David's Day is the 1st March, but confess to being hazy about the anniversary of St. Chad until I read in your review that it was on the following day.

Bloxham, Oxon. O. V. APLIN.

Have Birds a Sense of Humour? (p. 29)—From my own experience of them and from observation, I have not the smallest doubt they have. Our present feathered pet, a canary, is very fond of fun, and without being taught has developed a strong love for playful fighting with those he knows intimately, more especially in the evening before retiring for the night, when nothing pleases him more than to come forward with open bill and ruffled plumes, making a pretence of flying at the kind friend, who comes forward, cover in hand, to make him snug and comfortable for the night. I could give many other instances of the love of fun inherent in the feathered tribe as well as amongst our four-footed friends.

Broomhouse, Dunbar. C. NELSON.

Pale Tussock Moth (p. 33).—This moth certainly exhibits considerable eccentricity in the time of its appearance. Early last August, I brought home from the New Forest a few specimens of the larvæ, which fed up and pupated in due course. The chrysalids were kept indoors, under an average temperature of about 50° Fahr., and on November 15, I was surprised by the emergence of a female imago.

Streatham Hill. C. H. WATSON.

Birds at Windows.—I send you a list of the birds which came to my window during last month. Thrushes, blackbirds, sparrows, robins, starlings, hedge sparrows, cole tits, blue tits, and great tits, greenfinches, chaffinches, and nuthatches. The last named are most frequent in their visits, and seem voracious eaters, much enjoying seeds, crumbs, bones, &c., and they never tire of carrying off the nuts that are put out daily. I cannot persuade the tits or any of the birds to begin on a cocoa-nut which is hung up for them, the end being sawn off to leave the kernel exposed. The nuthatches cling to the edge of it, and will carry off the nuts which are deposited there for them, but never touch the cocoa-nut itself. Could any of your readers tell me how to tempt the birds to attack it? Two sparrow-hawks were observed close to this house early in the month on one of the very cold days. One of them swooped down from a Wellingtonia in the garden upon the greenhouse close by, and bore off a sparrow from the shoot.

Weston Lawn, Bath. S. BROOME.

Signs of Spring.—You may, perhaps, think it worth mentioning that the blackbird was heard here the third week in January, and was almost in full song on February 8. This seems very unusual. On the morning of February 13 I heard the lark, thrush, chaffinch, and hedge-sparrow singing at the same time. A few days before that date a rose tree against a wall facing south-west had upon it several clusters of fresh young leaves, and the buds of a lilac tree were on the point of bursting open.

Caerleon, Mon. C. E. CONWAY.

The Intelligence of Rooks.—Living as I do on the outskirts of a town, and therefore with restricted opportunities for observing bird life, I have for a long time been interested and amused by the habits of a tribe of rooks, which, except during the nesting season, favour my grounds with their presence almost continuously from early morning till dusk approaches, notwithstanding that the

few trees which I possess are hardly worthy of the name. There are often as many as a hundred at a time. Where they come from, and whither they go for the night, I have never ascertained, as there is no rookery near. I used to feed them during more than one of the severe winters of the past, and it is certain that they, or some of them, know me by sight as well as possible. I still often carry out some meat scraps to them, and there is one in particular which regularly watches for my appearance, and follows me about, at a distance of a few yards, wherever I go. The curious thing is that there has always been one bird to do this, for three or four years past. Whether it is always the same I cannot tell. The rook in question generally manages to get first turn at the food brought out, as it is so tame; but he cannot refrain from giving a caw when I appear, which quickly summons the rest, and then a free contest ensues. Indeed, rooks in this respect are not a model for imitation. No sooner does one secure a choice morsel, and attempt to fly away to enjoy it at leisure, than he is pursued by some six or eight others who try to deprive him of it, and often the "tit-bit" is dropped, and no one is the better for it. The wheelings and circlings of the birds during one of these chases are very graceful. This pursuit sometimes goes on when there is plenty more left behind, if the greedy pursuers would only help themselves, and leave their comrade alone. It is curious to observe the effort required to produce the familiar "caw." The head is lowered, and the beak opened wide, while at the same moment the tail goes up with a jerk almost at right angles, and the feathers of it are spread out to their full width. The effort to produce this "expression of the emotions" appears to convulse the whole of the bird's frame. During the breeding season, when a perpetual cawing is kept up, a great deal of what seems unnecessary energy must be exercised.

The Grange, Folkestone. A. L. HUSSEY.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. M. D.—Mrs. Brightwen says that meal-worms are the larvæ of a beetle (*Tenebrio molitor*) which lays its eggs in flour and meal; they hatch into a cream-coloured shiny grub, much like a wireworm. They can be bought at most bird shops and stores, or at Whiteley's, at tenpence a hundred. Millers will sometimes sell them at about three or four shillings a thousand. They are easily kept ready for use in a tin box filled with flour or oatmeal, with layers of flannel, on which they feed.

Anon.—A small box unaccompanied by name or address of sender, contained a specimen of *Nostoc commune*.

Epping Forest.—Are no Selbornians interested in Epping Forest, or resident in its neighbourhood? We ask because, although a correspondence with regard to its management has been carried on in the press for several weeks, nothing on the subject has reached NATURE NOTES.

WE MUST REQUEST THOSE WHO FAVOUR US WITH THEIR COMMUNICATIONS TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

New Address. — The Council have much pleasure in stating that they have acquired more convenient and commodious offices for the Society at 20, Hanover Square, W. (close to Regent Circus), to which address all business communications must be sent. In addition to excellent accommodation for the Council and Committees, the Society will have the use of the large hall for the Annual Meeting and Conversazione.

Field Club.—Members are referred to p. 74 of this issue.

PROGRAMME FOR APRIL.

April 7.—Kew to Richmond by towing path. Meet at Brentford Ferry Gate, Royal Gardens, Kew, 3 p.m. Paper by Mr. C. M. Thomas, M.A.

April 14.—Epping Lower Forest to Chingford. Meet at Wood Street station, 3 p.m. (Liverpool Street, 2.32).

April 21.—Barnes Common. Meet at Barnes station, 2.47 p.m. (Waterloo about 2 p.m.). Paper by Mr. Boscher, F.E.S.

April 28.—Cheshunt, visiting Old Manor House and Church. Meet at Waltham Cross station, 2.45 p.m. (Liverpool Street 2.15 p.m.). Paper by Mr. W. B. Gerish.

N.B.—Each month's Rambles will appear on this page throughout the summer.

Gilbert White Memorial.—The Council are glad to learn that a sum of £180 has been collected and promised towards what is known as the "Water Scheme" (full details of which will be found on page 114, vol. iv., 1893). Another £100 or so is required before the work can be commenced. Mr. F. W. C. Read, of "The Wakes," Selborne, is the Hon. Treasurer to the fund, to whom donations may be sent.

Annual Meeting.—The Council have pleasure in announcing the Annual Meeting and Conversazione for May 30. The loan of Natural History exhibits (Selbornian) are earnestly requested. All particulars can be obtained of the Hon. Secretary, Conversazione Committee, 20, Hanover Square, W.

The next meetings of the Council will be held *at the new address* on April 4 and May 2. The Magazine Committee will meet on April 18 at 5.30 p.m.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Croydon.— The Hon. Secretary, Mr. E. A. Martin, gave his popular and deeply interesting lecture on "Gilbert White and the Village of Selborne," at West Croydon Hall, on March 13. The lecture was much appreciated, and a cordial vote of thanks given to the lecturer.

Lower Lea Valley.—The Annual Meeting and Conversazione took place on March 14, at the North East London Institute, Dr. Daly, J.P., presiding. After the business meeting, at which a highly satisfactory report and balance sheet was adopted, and Officers for 1894 elected, the Entertainment programme was gone through. Amongst the many attractive items were the performances of the Pond House School Orchestral Band, conducted by Miss Champion, a lantern lecture by Dr. Gerard Smith, and the distribution of prizes by Mrs. Daly to the successful members of the junior section.

Lower Thames Valley.— The Annual Meeting of this flourishing Branch was held on February 28, Sir E. Hertslet, K.C.B., presiding. An extensive report of the excellent work done during the past year in Richmond and its neighbourhood was read, and a well-deserved compliment paid to Mr. John Allen, the Hon. Secretary. An excellent lantern lecture, by Messrs. Barnett and Cartledge, on the "Life History of a Fern," terminated a most successful meeting.

A Deputation waited upon the Managers of Sheen Common *re* the destruction of Furze, &c., with very encouraging results, of which a further notice will be given next month.

All communications for this page, not exceeding fifty words, must be sent before April 15 to the Hon. Secretary, Magazine and Leaflet Committee, at the Society's new address, 20, Hanover Square, W.

Nature Notes:
The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 53. MAY, 1894. Vol. V.

A NOTE UPON MR. BRIDGES.

THIS poet of some twenty volumes, many printed at a private press, and almost all a little shy and recluse and diffident in the circumstances of their issue, is beginning to find the favour which he has long evaded. Artful dramatist and sonnetteer, he is still best known by one little volume of lyrics, divided into four books, and entitled "Shorter Poems,"* and upon the natural felicity of this I wish to dwell, not considering even the fifth book lately added.

The peculiar charm of these lyrics to a lover of nature is not easy to define, though impossible not to feel. Here are not the miraculous eye and ear of Tennyson, nor the profound philosophic communing of Wordsworth, nor Arnold's Greek grace and fresh simplicity, nor the more violent raptures of Shelley, Byron, Mr. Swinburne, nor yet the deep deliciousness of Keats, the haunting dreaminess of Coleridge; still less are there the various manners and temperaments of the last century poets, Thomson or Cowper. That century can, indeed, show a little group of poets, not unlike this modern; the genius of Collins, the elegancies of the Wartons and of Bowles, which half look back upon Milton and the Elizabethans, half look forward to Wordsworth and the Victorians, have something in common with the spirit of these poems. But the especial charm seems to lie in their delicacy towards nature, in a kind of courtesy and worshipful adoration. This poet loves to note the airy, the less flaunting or obvious, of her beauties; as his metrical and musical skill takes us back to Milton and the Elizabethan lyrists, so too does his spiritual posture of mind.

* The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges. George Bell & Sons; 8vo, pp. 91; price 4s. 6d.

He sings the graces of nature with all the courteous ardour and delicacy of an old poet celebrating his mistress; and his tone, among the fields and thickets of spring, is that of other men among the wonders of art. Not that he is euphuistic, affected, artificial in his praise of nature, but, if the phrase be not too foolish, he seems careful not to hurt her feelings. Most men of any generous instincts are courteous, as well as kind, to their horse or dog. Mr. Bridges is courteous to a flower, a stream, a wood. He has a certain reticence in his speech, a certain restraint and reverential moderation; it is more than the instinct of the artist, it is the instinct of the man, deep in his nature. He writes never at random, but always in response to some appeal from the earth about him; some rare beauty of early spring, some waft of wind over the downs, some shadow flying along the sea, comes as a strain of music, waking accordant thoughts. His poems seem always to thank nature, and the Lord of nature, for this beauty, this delight; a poet of the nineteenth century, with subtleties of his own, he yet has a portion of the spirit of Saint Francis, who gave thanks, blessing, and praise for his "sisters and brothers," moon and sun, water and wind. It is a delicacy to be noted also in all Celtic peoples, with their "natural magic." In Mr. Bridges it does not pass into a faith or a superstition directly expressed, but it is the very soul of his loveliest lyrics, making them things of distinction and of grace.

It is not in single phrases that this poet of nature makes his power felt, but in the key of joyousness or pensiveness, to which each poem is set. The naturalist, who loves poetry, can hardly quote from him Tennysonian felicities of expression: the felicity of Mr. Bridges is a simpler thing, and he has no purple patches. He gives us less a number of brilliant pictures than the sentiment of a scene. His visions of spring, his praises of clear streams, and river banks, and glowing gardens, and open country, contain few positive details which any man might not have noted. It is his evocation from each scene or season of its individual spirit, its charm for the imagination, that is his distinctive mark: he is a *connoisseur* in the dainties and delicacies of nature, he can taste the quality of each, and assign to it its value. Here is a snatch of song, which shows us something of his mind, something akin to that of the nobler Epicureans:—

"The idle life I lead
Is like a pleasant sleep,
Wherein I rest and heed
The dreams that by me sweep.

"And still of all my dreams
In turn so swiftly past,
Each in its fancy seems
A nobler than the last.

"And every eve I say,
Noting my step in bliss,
That I have known no day
In all my life like this."

A lover of all literature, a lover of old music, emphatically a man of liberal culture and disciplined tastes, he appears to have a rare faculty for joy, finding it in all "the things that are more excellent." His two spring odes, the *Invitation to the Country* and the *Reply*, reveal his secret: the simple rural joys, fresh and innocent, or the town life of the scholar and the philosopher; he knows the heart of both, and can play the man in either part. A "bower beside the silver Thames," or a song by "the celestial spirit of Henry Purcell"; the fall of the pure snow over London, and the pale sun "standing by Paul's high dome," or the wind lashing down "the delicate-rankèd golden corn"; happy the man to whom all are alike dear and delightful! In "The Voice of Nature" he declares his understanding of the multiform wisdom of *Natura benigna*.

"I stand on the cliff and watch the veiled sun paling
A silver field afar in the mournful sea,
The scourge of the surf, and plaintive gulls sailing
At ease on the gale that smites the shuddering lea:
Whose smile severe and chaste
June never hath stirred to vanity, nor age defaced.
In lofty thought strive, O spirit, for ever:
In courage and strength pursue thine own endeavour.

"Ah! if it were only for thee, thou restless ocean
Of waves that follow and roar, the sweep of the tides;
Wer't only for thee, impetuous wind, whose motion
Precipitate all o'errides, and turns, nor abides:
For you sad birds and fair,
Or only for thee, bleak cliff, erect in the air;
Then well could I read wisdom in every feature,
O well should I understand the voice of Nature.

"But far away, I think, in the Thames valley,
The silent river glides by flowery banks:
And birds sing sweetly in branches that arch an alley
Of cloistered trees, moss-grown in their ancient ranks:
Where if a light air stray,
'Tis laden with hum of bees and scent of may.
Love and peace be thine, O spirit, for ever:
Serve thy sweet desire: despise endeavour.

"And if it were only for thee, entrancèd river,
That scarce dost rock the lily on her airy stem,
Or stir a wave to murmur, or a rush to quiver;
Wer't but for the woods, and summer asleep in them:
For you my bowers green,
My hedges of rose and woodbine, with walks between,
Then well could I read wisdom in every feature
O well should I understand the voice of Nature."

Very winning are the poems of the river: clear, running water, water flowers and overhanging branches, have a fascination for this poet. There are certain of these poems which seem made for Oxford men in an especial way: poems which recall to the sons of that "dear city of youth and dream," long hours of summer upon Cherwell and Isis. The enchanting loneliness, half sylvan and half of the water is given us here;

the sense that this day is a piece of Paradise, a golden and blessed day, rescued from the turmoil of life. But Mr. Bridges is no slave of the lotos: he is full of the energy of the earth and of life. Thus in his "Morning Hymn," hailing the sun:—

> "Now with resplendent flood
> Gladden my waking eyes,
> And stir my slothful blood
> To joyous enterprise.
>
> "Arise, arise, as when
> At first God said LIGHT BE!
> That He might make us men
> With eyes His light to see.
>
> "Scatter the clouds that hide
> The face of heaven, and show
> Where sweet Peace doth abide,
> Where Truth and Beauty grow."

In all these poems Mr. Bridges is singing the *Benedicite:* he would appreciate that ancient Catholic usage of blessing *creatura ignis, creatura aquæ*. Apart from any direct morality or philosophy to be won from nature, he delights in the life of nature for its own sake. As George Herbert has it:

> "O mighty love! man is one world, and hath
> Another to attend him."

Just as the looks and ways of a friend are lovingly studied, so should be those of nature, without patronage or condescension; nature is to be respected. Said an old Irishwoman in her lonely cabin upon a lonely place: "I stand at the door, and look at the mountain, and think of the goodness of God." That instinctive poetry is worth a thousand "arguments from design." And the poetry of Mr. Bridges is a scholar's rendering into words of that instinct. See! he seems to say, all the magic of spring, the various beauty of the year, the joyous miracles of wind, and rain, and pleasant sun! With exquisite delicacy of music, a music carefully wrought out with cunning cadences, he celebrates each happy festival, or solemn fast of nature: he sings of her sanctuaries and cloisters, or of her courts and palaces.

> "I once more smell the dew and rain,
> And relish versing,"

said Herbert, after a time of darkness and anxiety; the two joys went hand in hand, just as our visions of Paradise are filled with flowers, and light, and music, or as the Church on earth loves them, and the fragrant incense. In all Mr. Bridges' work there is this kind of spirit; he is not lavish of his art, and counts it sacrilege to pour forth all his emotions, passions, thoughts at the feet of Urania. His muse goes chastely, brightly, becomingly, with no wanton pace. In all that he writes, be it the slightest thing, there is a certain seriousness amid the gaiety, a certain sense of responsibility; the natural details chosen, the tone and

effect of the whole, do not come by chance. And so, if he tells us of the first appearance of spring in the hedgerows, with delicate phrases and cadences, we feel that the sight of them, and the consequent train of emotion, were as impressive to him, as charged with significance, as a passage from Sophocles or Virgil, or a strain of solemn music. Too many poets give us either vague generalities about nature, the "blue sky" or the "loud wind," as though all blue skies and loud winds were alike: or they, in Wordsworth's phrase, "take an inventory of nature's charms," and omit nothing. Mr. Bridges has a happier way. Take this picture of a belated spring.

"Wanton with long delây the gây spring leaping cometh;
The blackthorn starreth nów his bóugh on the eve of Máy.
All dáy in the sweet box-trée the bée for pleasure hummeth:
The cuckoo sends aflóat his nóte on the air all dáy.

"How dewy nights agáin and ràin in gentle shówer
At root of tree and flówer have quenched the winter's drouth.
On high the hot sun smiles, and banks of clóud uptówer
In bulging heads that crówd for milés the dazzling south."

The accents that I have ventured to use are meant to draw attention to Mr. Bridges' artful intricacy of interlinked and repeated rhymes. That little poem in its buoyant, leaping measure, admirably sets before us the happy coming of spring, in a few dexterous lines: but no hasty versifier could have done it. Or take this first stanza from a poem upon "The Downs."

"O bold majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely;
O still solitude, only matched in the skies:
Perilous in steep places,
Soft in the level races,
Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies;
With lovely undulation of fall and rise;
Entrenched with thickets thorned,
By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned!"

There, from the vast spaces of earth and sky, to the tiny flowers nestling in the "thickets thorned" is the very likeness of the thing itself, without vagueness, without servility.

A bright purity of air is in these poems, a white and cleanly spirit; old words, "buxom, blithe, and debonair," as in Milton's line, recur to us in reading them. They take us into an Arcadia, into Hesperides, which are not artificially pastoral and innocent, but living realities. Here are no opiate dreams of enchanted places, languorous and somnolent and morbid, full of heavy spice odours and the other properties of narcotic poets. Here are the reaches of the Thames, the English downs, the homeliness of English gardens, orchards, fields and copses. Upon these, Mr. Bridges dwells with contented joy, finding in them all the magic and the beauty that the muses need. These furnish him with thoughts grave and ardent, fancies happy and gay; these, and the riches of the high and ancient arts. It is a winning poetry, that grows upon us, and steals into our memo-

ries, and mingles with our joy of life with nature. In a little lyric of singular beauty, Mr. Bridges declares the conviction of his art, the secret motive and impulse of his muse; let me end upon this perfect and true melody.

"I love all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.

"I too will something make,
And joy in the making;
Altho' to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking."

LIONEL JOHNSON.

THE WINTER FLIGHTS OF CRANES IN THE PUNJAB.

I HAVE been so much interested in the account which my friend, Mr. Thomas Lambert Barlow, has given me of the migration of these birds, that I am led to think the narrative worthy of a place in NATURE NOTES, our magazine. I should mention at the outset that Mr. Barlow has spent over thirty years of his life in that district of Upper India, and was more than an ordinary observer of the habits and gathering places of the various birds of that country.

The bird is the "Demoiselle" Crane (*Scops virgo*), which, though common in many parts of Africa, has been known to visit Asia and even some parts of Eastern Europe. It is not the tufted crane (*Belearica pavonina*), nor the Siberian crane (*Grus gigantea*), though from its height and plumage it might by some be mistaken for this. In general colour it is of greyish-blue, with white ear-tufts, a black velvety colour on the head, and black beak. There are but very few flowing plumes on its breast, and two or three of its inner tail feathers are so well curled, and of such perfect hue, as to be much valued by native chieftains and rajahs as "aigrettes" for their turbans. In average height the bird may be said to be about three feet six inches.

These birds make their appearance in the month of September in the plains of the Punjab, and generally in incredibly large numbers, flying very high when they arrive, but much lower when they take their departure in the April following; and it is a wonderful sight to watch the flocks passing overhead from the north, from whence they come. In travelling they divide themselves into flocks, numbering about thirty or forty birds in a flock, and their mode of flight

is in the form of a wedge, or I should rather say, more like the letter V—similar, indeed, somewhat to the flight of wild duck to our shores. An old bird leads in the van, others follow, and the young birds bring up the rear. Their curious and distinctive call is heard from a long distance off. The cry of the old bird resembles the sound of the words *krān-krān*, which is taken up and responded to by the young birds with a shrill and piercing note like *cheen-cheen*. The Punjabees call them "koonj," and the Hindustanees "koolung," and all herald their approach as the commencement of their winter season.

Perhaps their most favourite haunts are in the neighbourhood of the villages of Shah-Mahmūdi, Traab and Jubbee, situated near the bed of the river Sohān, which flows into the Indus near the first-named village. It is in these low-lying and marshy lands that they find the insects, small reptiles, and fish on which they chiefly feed, though they are not averse from fattening themselves on the young grain which at that time of the year is just showing above ground. As the young birds are good eating, especially after they have been for some time in the country, they frequently fall a prey to the gun of the European sportsman; and in many instances the natives themselves, who rather relish the delicacy, invent many ingenious methods of capturing them. There is to be seen, of course, the usual trap by horse-hair nooses, which are placed near their feeding grounds, a plan generally resorted to by the boys of the villages; but perhaps the most unique and original method of catching them is by the simple expedient of a line and weight, which is termed by the natives a "kiovry-arāh" or "crane-check." This line, not unlike coarse whipcord, is made by twisting together strands of the "moonj" grass (*Saccharum Moonja*), and possesses the advantage of not readily getting into a knot or tangle. Each man takes about forty or fifty yards of this cord, and winds it loosely between his hand and elbow, so as to run out easily, and the pendant to it is a six- or eight-ounce weight of lead, iron, or sometimes of stone, which is hurled at the birds when in flight, who become entangled in the cord usually by their necks or wings. The natives of the villages assemble sometimes by a hundred or more at a time for the enjoyment of this sport, and generally choose a dark night for the purpose, though they are known to go out sometimes when the moon is shining. The men, as a rule, lie concealed in the bed of the river at some distance from where the birds are feeding, they then detach three or four men to act as beaters, who, taking a wide circle, come round at the back of the cranes. When disturbed the birds fly away from them, and going along the river bed very soon come within range of the kiovry-arāhs, and the whole flock is suddenly assailed with these missiles, and thus many are entangled and taken.

Though thus ensnared they are by no means easy to lay hold of, for they use their beaks and legs with great nimbleness,

screech loudly when they are approached, and peck with considerable force. The natives dash forward to seize them with great caution, and usually lay hold of the neck, when they at once despatch them—or, as they say, render them "Hallal," in the orthodox Mahomedan fashion.

In some parts of the country the natives use hawks to catch these birds, and those usually flown at them are called "bhairi" (*Falco calidus*), and the "churgh" (*Falco saker*). In rare instances the "baz," answering to our goshawk (*Astur palumbarius*), is trained for the purpose; but so difficult and tedious is the task of teaching them, that when successful it is customary for the rajah of the country to give a handsome reward to the fortunate trainer. The tiercelet, or male of the "baz," is a much smaller bird, and is never trained for the purpose. The natives call this hawk the "jura."

The ryots naturally have their legends connected with these cranes, as indeed they have with the parrot, crow, and other birds of the country. Doubtless many of your readers are acquainted with these, from the various interesting folk-lore tales that have been published from time to time.

One little tradition shall here suffice:—A peafowl of the district accosted one of these cranes, and began to taunt him with his roving, gad-about propensities, saying, "Either your country must be a good-for-nothing place to live in, or you must be a greedy lot not to be content with what you have there." The crane replied, "You bibble-babble, it is neither one thing nor the other, but rather that we have been brought up to believe that there is no part of God's earth kept exclusively for any one, so we go where we like under His protection; but as for you, you rusticate in a corner and are therefore devoid of sense."

This legend, it is said, had its effect on a rajah of the country who lived many years ago, and who expressed himself in these words:—"Truly these birds come to us as guests, and must be hospitably entertained as such, and henceforth the order is that none of these 'perdēēsies,' or foreigners, shall, under any circumstances, be molested." And the order was strictly obeyed during his reign.

J. F. A. McNair.

A Tame Great Tit.—During this winter a great tit came frequently to the window for coco-nut and nuts, and was so wonderfully tame that he would come inside on the sill to take pieces of hazlenut, and at last would take bits out of our fingers; he was not at all particular as to who gave him the nut, and he would take it from quite strangers. He came many times a day, and would often let us know he was there by peering into the window, and sometimes by fluttering close to the pane. He did this for about four or five weeks, and then his visits became less frequent and finally ceased, and as far as we could tell, he was but one of the many great tits who were constantly at the window for fat and other good things. We sadly feared that his nut food must have disagreed with him, and that it was an afflicting case of "wild nature *killed* by kindness."

Frensham. L. F. M.

MY FRIEND THE STARLING.

In April, at the dawning of the day,
The chiff-chaff's tremulous gladness fills mine ear,
From out the tasselled birch the thrush calls clear
"Come quick! come quick! come quick!" to loitering May,
—May with her casket of attempered clay
Wherein those speckled jewels shall appear—;
Ah, not for me, impatience or glad cheer,
For other hearts their hopes they sing and say.

Yet one peculiar confidential friend
Have I—the starling—garrulous, full of fun—,
He, ere the thrushes call, the chiff-chaff wakes,
My chimney for a speaking-trumpet takes,
And down into my darkened room doth send
The first true tidings of the joyous sun.

H. D. Rawnsley.

OCTOBER IN NEW ZEALAND.

AT no season of the year is the "bush" more pleasant than in October. Even the woods and green glades of England can hardly surpass the forests of New Zealand during this month. A score of pleasant perfumes scent the warm air at noon, lingering faintly throughout the evening, and in heavy close nights even until the morrow's dawn. Most fragrant of all are the low woods and the smaller trees and shrubs that flourish on the edges of the forest—the ngaio, the purple tough broom, the native blackberry, the kaiwhiria and the rangiora, now beginning to brown as if burnt with frost. Upon this run, and indeed, in the surrounding district too, only the cold and damp southern slopes are timbered. Overlooking one of these wooded valleys, I notice that the general level of tree tops varies little. From the water-worn ravines here and there a few tall sombre tapering pines stand out more prominently, and poplar-shaped rewarewas line the ridges of the spurs. Otherwise, as upon wind-swept hills near the coast, the leafy surface of the "bush" is smooth or undulating according to the nature of the ground beneath.

A slight breeze now and then stirs the grasses about me. Above expands a vault of cloudless blue, the sun striking the green leaves at an angle that makes many of them glimmer and gleam. Below, where the moisture and mist from a little waterfall continually damps their great palm leaves and smooth green stems, grow a couple of nikaus. The nikau is the only real palm we possess in New Zealand. It refuses to live out of the

forest, withering at once when exposed to dry winds or sunshine. A number of tree ferns close alongside are shooting forth huge brown circinate fronds, or where the wind ruffles their expanded feathery leaves, showing the silver beneath. The scented palm-lily or "cabbage tree" is loaded with elegant spikes of white blossom. In spite of its prosaic name, this is one of our most ornamental trees. Whether drawn by the height of the forest trees or growing more sturdily alone, or wrapped, like a beggar, in cloak of russet brown leaves that cling to the stem, or standing solitary on the mountain tops, it is always graceful and beautiful. These trees will stand terrific blasts of wind, for the upward-growing sharp leaves at the end of each bare bough offer no more resistance than the silk of an umbrella blown inside out. The berries of the titoki are ripe now, the ebony seed embedded in cups of scarlet flesh, after the manner of the yew at home. In the titoki, however, the colours are very much more brilliant.

On the higher hill slopes where the bush ends the manuka begins. It takes the place of the gorse of the old country, and is the curse of half the North Island. From where I sit I can see many of the hillsides white with its pretty flowers. Millions of bronze-green beetles live on the tender shoots, and native bees innumerable buzz round the faintly scented blossoms. These native bees make their nests by boring in cliffs of clay or sandstone. Each bee, I think, lives separately, and in the branch passages is deposited honey and pollen mixed; upon this a single egg is laid. In the northern parts of the island the honey bees are said to get a great amount of nectar from the manuka, but hereabouts I have never seen an English bee upon this scrub.

Twining round the low bushes upon the edge of the wood, the native blackberry flourishes best—"lawyer" it is often termed from its tenacity of grip; sheep in the woolly months are often caught, and turning round and round after the foolish manner of their kind, twist the runners into a rope so strong that even a man cannot break it. As a rule, after being burnt off the "lawyers" die; whereas the British blackberry is almost impossible to kill—another example of the great vitality of the imported vegetation. Now and again, in the varying breezes, a whiff of the smell of the heinga-heinga reaches me. Its odour is so strong and so like the smell of swine, that I have known even natives pig-hunting deceived by the strange resemblance.

From the dead boughs of a huge totara, standing high above the mushroom timber of a few score years, the tuis ceaselessly dart and return; as they swoop down from above, with the noise of a stick drawn rapidly through the air, the sun gleams on the metallic reflections of their plumage. There are no more liquid notes in the whole forest than those of the "parson bird," though sometimes this strange songster ends the most exquisite melody by a sound only to be compared to a drunkard clearing his throat. The name "parson-bird" has been applied to the tui because of

the tufts of curly white new feathers, bearing a fanciful resemblance to the tie of a black-coated clergyman. Among the ancient Maories the tui was a favourite cage bird. His powers of mimicry are considerable. I have sometimes heard even wild birds imitating the grunting of pigs in the "bush." Though sometimes living for years in confinement, yet usually convulsive fits cause death within the first twelve months.

In the open country, from clumps of tall veronica and tutu, I hear all round me the shining cuckoo's plaintive oft-repeated whistle; the long-tailed cuckoo is rarer with us, only once within the last hour have I heard its strange, harsh cry. I have never seen this latter bird in my life, indeed, both are shy and to be seen far less seldom than the British cuckoo. Rising with a twitter, a flock of male goldfinches pass over my head suddenly. Then a cicada shrills on my back like an insane Waterbury watch running down. These cheerful insects love the hottest banks, and are very fond, too, of perching on a passing rider's hat or sleeves. Over a shallow rippling brook hover bee-hawks (libellula), and delicate blue water-flies, their wings, when at rest, curiously folded on one side of the body. A few small white moths flutter aimlessly among the karamu boughs, and the fantails never seem to tire of their airy convolutions over the stream where the midges dance. In a fuchsia bush, about five yards to my right, two wax-eyes have their nest. Within are three diminutive blue eggs. These pretty little birds are very gentle and tame. Often they smooth each other's plumes, or sit close alongside one another like love-birds on a perch, showing no alarm at my presence. At earliest dawn I have noticed them in the dew-soaked tutu bushes, communicating to each other by means of a sort of whisper-song, hardly audible even at two yards' distance. Everything now seems to be happy and alive in the fuller spring, and these are but a few of the more prominent features in the natural history of October.

H. GUTHRIE-SMITH.

A Fact in Cat Life.—The autumn of 187— was very wet, rains had been most heavy, and the river near our old home overflowed its boundaries far. Only a narrow field and a gravel walk separated the river from our garden. At that time we had a clever cat, some years old, called "Reekie." When the river began to cover the field, Reekie was out taking a walk; the water covered the field, then the gravel walk, then the garden, which is a long one, and rapidly so increased in volume and depth that the steps from the back door (rather a long flight) were under water. We called Reekie from the verandah of the dining-room window. No Reekie appeared, but presently a curious object appeared swimming up the garden of the next house; this proved to be Reekie on the back of a small black pig. Reekie jumped from the pig's back on to his own verandah, and the pig was also saved—taken in next door. How did the pig know where to come with his burden? How did Reekie instruct it where to bring him? Surely animals must, in their own manner, communicate their knowledge and thoughts, else Reekie must have been drowned. M. GARDNER.

THE PARTRIDGE.*

This is an instalment of the "Fur and Feather Series," edited by Mr. E. T. Watson, and the first 81 pp. of the present volume, in which Mr. Macpherson deals with the natural history of our gray partridge, is the portion which most concerns the readers of NATURE NOTES. The writer treats, in his well-known style, in successive chapters, of the partridge at home and abroad, in the fields, its love and courtship, its nests, as pets, of its colours, and of poaching it. In tracing the range and distribution of the partridge, the author touches upon the question of migration, and points out that "on the Continent the partridge is probably a more decided migrant, or semi-migrant, than in our country." But even here it is a "quasi-migrant, since coveys frequently perform short journeys —as, for example, across the Solway Firth." Something upon this point has appeared in a recent number of *The Zoologist*. In the following chapters the life-history and habits of our partridge are pleasantly sketched at some length. Mr. Macpherson truly remarks that the habits of the partridge have altered somewhat of late years. But, speaking from our own experience of the district best known to us, we only wish we could agree entirely with him when he says that "the frequent destruction of nests in the open meadows has convinced many female partridges of the advantages supplied to nesting birds by the shelter afforded by the briars and brambles that festoon the banks of the older and untrimmed hedgerows." Quite as many partridges' nests, we fear, are mown out now-a-days (when the grass is cut before the end of June), as was the case formerly. This is perhaps partly owing to the fact that higher farming has reduced the size and proportions of the old-fashioned "hairy" fence. An interesting chapter on the colours of the partridge introduces us to the "varieties" of this bird which are known to have occurred, and we have also a useful *résumé* of Mr. Grant's observations upon the characteristics by which the male may be distinguished from the female. "Poaching partridges"—apparently a subject not easily exhausted—is full of interesting incidents; but surely the author is a little too hard on our sporting forefathers in the matter of "netting." *They*, at least, if we mistake not, pursued this form of sport in the daytime, and used the "setting-dog." Partridges as pets will be appreciated by lady readers especially, and indeed, the book as a whole will commend itself highly to the field naturalist.

The subject of shooting partridges is a little out of the province of this periodical, although a good shot, who kills his birds cleanly and well (and has, therefore, a smaller proportion of wounded birds than the "duffer,"), should be well pleasing to those who, while they eat partridges very willingly, yet "deplore the cruelties of sport." We must be content, therefore, with saying that Mr. Stuart-Wortley's contribution (which forms the bulk of the book) is the work of a master hand. To prove, however (if, indeed, any proof was wanted), that the modern shooter, the avowed advocate of "driving," is not necessarily less apt to observe and appreciate the natural objects around him, one extract will suffice. It is a sample of the author's pleasant style:—

"Again the scene is changed. You stand on Itchen Down, and while you sniff the bracing air you strain your eyes to mark, amid the blue distance, beyond the rolling slopes of sheltering woods and open fields, the spire of Salisbury, or the clustering towers of William of Wykeham; to trace the specks of light that tell where the silver stream of Test gives back the November rays; or to wonder whether, far in the south-west, your eye can reach to where the great ocean liners are thundering up and down the Solent. The tinkle of sheep-bells strikes sharply on the ear, and you watch on the lower stretch of down opposite how the shepherd guides the sheep, down past the chalk-pit cutting like a white wound in the hill, through the junipers and straggling patches of gorse to the great yew tree overhanging the gateway, till the flock pours like a stream of oil into the turnip field where they are to feed. A feeling of contentment spreads over you as you

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* *The Partridge*. Natural History by the Rev. H. A. Macpherson; Shooting by A. J. Stuart-Wortley; Cookery by George Saintsbury. Illustrated; pp. i.-vi., 276. Longmans: 1893. Price 5s.

survey the great fence of thorn in front of you, so big and thick that a dozen or so of stunted oaks and hollies are almost lost in it, while not a speck of sky shows through till ten feet from the ground. A white butterfly, the last of the year, comes dancing down the stubble, settles on the fence, uneasily flickers over the top, and disappears. Aimlessly you push the safety bolt of your gun up and down as the barrels lie at ease in the palm of your left hand, and lazily you wonder whether that bit of bright red down the fence is an autumn leaf, or a bit of cloth, or what; and then whether the birds will come to the right or left of the big holly, or over the tall spray of briar which sticks up, still bearing one bright golden leaf, just where the butterfly disappeared! And the butterfly takes you back to the summer, and you dream for a spell."

And then the shooter loses himself for a space in reminiscences which ever come to while away the time, whether we wait for the driven birds, or, in more humble sport, for the wood-pigeons to come home to roost in the fir spinney while the freezing wind soughs and swishes in spruce and larch top, or motionless with wet feet and numbed bodies in the bleak flooded meadows at nightfall, we keep (despite our dream) our ears alert to catch the *whe-whe-whe* of wings, or the broken quack-ack-ak of the mallard which shall announce the "flighting" of the ducks.

Having first shot our partridges, the natural sequence of events is that we should proceed to cook them, and if we do not know how to do so, and how to do it to the best advantage after reading the third portion of this volume, it will not be Mr. Saintsbury's fault. Few will combat his conclusion that the best way to treat young, plump, properly-kept birds, "uncontaminated with red-leggism," is to roast them in front of the fire. But for those who are aweary of this primary form of cookery, as well as for those who have on their hands old birds, or birds falling short of perfection in quality and condition, a number of most useful recipes for rendering them delicious are given. One of the best of the "secondary" forms of cooking is the old English partridge pudding, and the author reminds us that the meat pudding of all kinds is "intensely English, a thing not understanded of the benighted foreigner." The whole essay is charmingly written. Of the illustrations (which are all gems in their way) we should incline to give the palm (among those of the bird itself) to the cock in "Courting," and the bird in the left foreground of "Hard Times." The belly of "the towered bird" strikes us as too fluffy.

O. V. APLIN.

BOOKS FOR OUT OF DOORS.

SEVERAL books about things out-of-doors, which came at a time when there was not much to be seen in the woods and fields, have been through the force of circumstances delayed until we are able to compare the printed accounts with the things described. Let us see whether the books lose by the comparison.

Certainly this is not the case with anything which the "Son of the Marshes" writes. His last book *With the Woodlanders and by the Tide* (Blackwood & Son, 6s.), edited as usual by Mrs. Owen, who has done so much towards drawing Mr. Denham Jordan from his obscurity at Leatherhead, has lost little of the freshness which marked his first literary venture. He still represents Richard Jefferies more truly than any other writer, and the resemblance extends to the rapidity with which the volumes of his essays succeed one another. It seems captious to say anything disparaging of a fertility which keeps the nature-loving public supplied with the reading which it loves; and yet we feel that both Mr. Jordan and his prototype fail to advance, even though they do not deteriorate. Whether a large amount of good work is more desirable than a smaller quantity of higher excellence, is open to discussion; meanwhile we may accept thankfully what this genuine naturalist offers.

The sketch of "The Woodlanders," which stands first in this volume, is no unworthy pendant to Mr. Hardy's story with the same name. Mr. Jordan's

evident acquaintance with the life of the dwellers in our woods qualifies him to give us more of the folklore still remaining than he has hitherto done; will he not remember this while it is yet strong enough to resist the levelling influence of the school board? "Very little will be left," he says, "after another quarter of a century has elapsed;" let us then make the most of what remains. There are some good stories in the essay on "Poachers and Poaching," while in "Old Hedgerows" and "Alders and Reeds," the author is seen at his best. We do not quite understand the use of the word "sic" in such a sentence as "their sons and daughters profess to laugh at the superstitions (*sic*) in which their parents still firmly believe:" the meaning attached to it can scarcely be the usual one, as it is not affixed to any quotation.

Mr. F. A. Knight is another of the Jefferies school whose work we have before had occasion to commend. *By Moorland and Sea* (Elliot Stock, 5s.) contains some of the articles familiar to the readers of the *Daily News*, with others from different sources. Mr. Knight's pencil gives effective aid to his descriptions of scenery; and some of his sketches are very pretty. Four of the essays deal with Scotland; one or two with historical localities, but the bulk are "Selbornian" in style and subject. We like best "Sounds of the Night" and "The Bird's-nester," but all are pleasant reading, and cannot fail to interest the lover of nature. It is not Mr. Knight's fault if he finds formidable rivals in the field which he has chosen; the nature-loving public is a large and increasing one, and he will not and should not lack readers.

A somewhat more original and livelier note is struck by Mr. Aubyn Trevor-Battye in his *Pictures in Prose* (Longmans, 6s.), drawn from "nature, wild sport and humble life." "Prose" such as Mr. Trevor-Battye's has many affinities in poetry, and we are not surprised to find him actually dropping into verse—and very good verse—now and then, as in the graceful dedication to his mother, the lines entitled "Vesper" which close the volume, and other little poems scattered through the book. Here and there we find him on the same lines as the "Son of the Marshes"—the chapter on "The Witch in Kent," for instance, may be correlated with "The Woodlanders" referred to above, who are presumably drawn from Surrey originals. But he strikes fresh ground in such essays as "With Carl of the Hill," "a sketch from life" of a Scandinavian farmer, hunter and timber cutter, and his little daughter, a very living and pathetic portrait. "The Land of the Great Spirit" tells of Mr. Battye's wanderings in Manitoba, and these experiences in distant regions afford a pleasant contrast with his home travels in Norfolk, Essex and Oxford. "The Procession of Spring" is delicate and fanciful; but the botanist in the heart of a big city who had only one holiday a year, and that Christmas Day, and who had therefore never seen the bird's-eye speedwell, strikes us as an improbability, and we are sure Mr. Battye does not think "campylotropous, quintuplinerved, tetradynamous," are names of flowers, though he writes as though he did. This is a very pretty and pleasure-giving book.

Yet another volume, and again one consisting in part of reprints. If the appearance of books such as these under notice shows the existence of a large nature-loving public, the publication of so many essays on natural history in newspapers and magazines, is still stronger evidence of the popularity of the subject. If folk would only go one step further and observe for themselves, little would be left to wish for. Mr. P. Anderson Graham's *All the Year with Nature* (Smith Elder & Co., 5s.), is somewhat more systematic than the books already noticed. He begins with spring, when he tells us about birds and bird-nesting, then talks us into summer, through the pleasures of June; harvest-time, and kindred subjects represent autumn, while winter brings its characteristic scenery and associations, and ends with "a winter's tale." Character sketches are dotted in here and there with no uncertain hand, and if we do not stray beyond the borders of England, we find—as every nature-loving Englishman knows—no lack of interest in the ordinary round of life, in the meanest flower that blows, or the commonest bird that sings. The four books just noticed are, indeed, no small evidence of this. In none of them is there any attempt at fine writing, none gives that impression of bookmaking which never fails to betray the hand

of one who tries to describe what he has not seen. The abundance of such books is the best evidence of the existence of a spirit among us for which we cannot be too thankful, and which Selbornians should be careful to cultivate.

Last month we noticed the first volume of *The Country Month by Month* (Bliss, Sands and Foster: 1s. paper, 2s. cloth), and we are glad to find in the April instalment ample justification for the good opinion already expressed. Professor Boulger, who is doubtless responsible for the botany, and Mrs. Owen, who presumably looks after the birds, have produced between them an excellent work, and one which will have more than a passing popularity. It is a relief to find writers dealing with the natural history of the months who refrain from the hackneyed (and often second-hand) quotations from Gerard and worn-out scraps of verse which have long seemed inseparable from books of this kind. Here we have popular botany brought up to date by an incorporation of the more recent observations of naturalists, while the wild speculations of Mr. Grant Allen and his imitators are conspicuously absent. A wholesome vein of Selbornian teaching runs through the present volume Here and there are traces of somewhat hasty editing; such a sentence as "Just after an April shower nothing looks more as if just washed and laid to bleach" should not have been allowed to pass; and it is odd to read of "what is termed *phrenology*, the dates of the appearance of flowers, leaves, insects, bird migrants, &c." Reading the book in a train going through Surrey meadows, a look out of the windows confirmed our former impression that Shakespeare's "cuckoo-birds of yellow hue" were marsh-marigolds, not buttercups, as our authors suggest; and we cannot agree with those who object to Shakespeare's well-known lines that "the daisy is not a meadow flower." The curious viviparous leaves of lady's smock might have been mentioned.

SELBORNIANA.

Epping Forest.—Our readers may wonder that we have no reference to the alleged disfigurement of Epping Forest, which has occupied much space in the papers during the last two months or more. We are ourselves surprised that no Selbornian has thought it worth while to acquaint us with the facts of the case. We have invited Mr. A. P. Laurie and Mr. Percy Lindley, each of whom has written to the press on the subject, to send us an account of what has taken place, but neither of these gentlemen has thought it worth while to reply to our letters: so that we are unable to do more than refer to the correspondence now in progress in other vehicles of public opinion.

The Alligators of Louisiana and Florida.—The following is translated from *Prometheus*, a German scientific journal:—"In consequence of the great demand for alligator skins for boots and shoes, travelling bags, purses, &c., alligators have become so rare, that it has been feared in about ten years they will be extinct. Since ten or twelve years, hundreds of sportsmen have done their worst to exterminate these creatures. When some time ago the Government commissioned Messrs. Smiley and Gopebriwitch to investigate the fisheries of the lakes and rivers of Louisiana, only a few alligators were found. Formerly these animals reached a length of thirteen metres, but in the last decade no specimens were found longer than four or five metres. Since that time the numbers of fish have increased considerably in those waters, but as the scarcity of the much prized material for leather makes itself felt in trade, alligator breeding-places have been established in several places. People in Florida have observed that since the disappearance of the alligators, the water-voles have increased at an alarming rate. The good qualities of the alligator are now being remembered, how rarely it attacked human beings, and at most caught a young pig now and then. In order to check the water-vole plague, the Government of Florida has granted a close-time for alligators. May not similar reasons have induced the ancient Egyptians to include the crocodile among their sacred animals, and to protect it by religious law?"

M. C. A.

Expensive Pigeon-Shooting.—The *Bradford Observer* says:—"A certain class of sportsmen seem to imagine that by paying for a gun licence they become entitled to blaze away at everything that has wings and can fly. The Wild Birds Protection Act has, however, taught some of them better. Owners of long-distance homing pigeons, however, are still great sufferers from the lower class of 'pot hunters,' and in the course of a season birds to the value of many thousands of pounds are shot down in the Black Country and various southern districts. One notorious 'pot hunter' has declared that until the police began to interfere with his practices he has brought down as many as fifty birds in a single day. These murdered *voyageurs* are sold by their destroyers to the poulterers at the rate of 4d. or 5d. apiece, although their living value may have been £3 to £5, or even more. Within the next few weeks an attempt is to be made in Parliament to see if something cannot be done to put down the practice."

Walled Off and Walled In.—The *Daily Chronicle* remarks that of course Mr. Waldorf (Walled-off) Astor, who bought Cliveden from the Duke of Westminster, hastened to shut out tourists with iron railings, and brick walls stuck with glass bottles. Visitors who were startled the other year by the great house with its high stone boundary walls which has sprung up at West Malvern, may be pardoned for shortening the title of The Dowager Countess Howard de Walden into "Lady Wall'd-in."

B.

A Word for the Lighthouse Men.—I have often thought of the weary and watchful hours passed by the light keepers, as I have passed by in a comfortable steamer; and with them how little we recognise how much we owe to our silent workers of all kinds. We praise the heroic efforts of the life-boat, but the disasters that are prevented by the lighthouse and its patient workers are worthy of at least some consideration. Their very loneliness and isolation ought to win them our sympathy.

Some weeks ago, I had to spend two days in Anglesey, and I took advantage of my visit to see the wonderful South Stack. Of its beauties of scenery and the marvels of its life-saving machinery, this is not the place to speak, but I want to say a word for the men. They are splendid fellows! Silent, brave, patient and watchful, thousands owe their lives to them every month! An hour's forgetfulness and what evils might happen. The man who showed me over told me many most interesting facts noted by himself and his mates concerning the birds seen by them, especially concerning the gulls, guillemots, and razor-bills which build in thousands on the islands and surrounding rocks. As an illustration of their intelligent observation let me quote but one of his sayings: "You see, sir, their eggs are laid on the bare rock, but they don't roll off; if they are moved they roll round in a small circle, not being oval, like most birds' eggs, but like a top, very sharp, as if this was a provision of nature against their being lost." My wife and I have sent these men some books and some plants for their little gardens, and I hope that this note may induce others to contribute some little thing or things of the same sort, to encourage these fine fellows.

Birmingham. LAWSON TAIT.

A Brahmin's Impressions at the Chicago World's Fair.—"While our eyes are enjoying the sight of skilful works in gold, silver, copper, &c., and the mind is absorbed in the happy reflection that man can produce such marvels out of rude materials, our attention is suddenly drawn towards a butcher's den by the shocking smell of the hides, carcasses, tails, feathers, &c., designated by the name of 'furs.' Amongst the 'flesh eaters,' less cultured societies murder lower animals for the sake of making ornaments and garments, and the better cultured only for food. This desire of decorating themselves with skins and dead birds is a remnant of the barbarism of ancient times, a remnant of which even the most barbarous communities ought to be ashamed in this era of science and art. The most lamentable circumstance about this barbarism is that it is cherished by the fair sex, which should be the source of gentleness, purity and kindness."—*Asiatic Quarterly Review*, January, 1894, p. 191.

A Plea for Sea-gulls (pp. 16, 37).—A correspondent of the *Whitehaven News* having called attention to the shooting of gulls from the pier at Whitehaven, the Rev. Canon Rawnsley published in that paper, for March 22, the following letter:—"To shoot a seagull from the pierhead is about as mean a thing as a man can do at any time; but now, within the breeding season, it is as cruel as it is cowardly and illegal. The close season for wild birds began on March 1. But what I would point out is that the man who shoots at a seagull at any time is as much the enemy of man as he is of the poor sea-bird. These seagulls are the scavengers of our coasts;

'the ocean at its task
Of pure ablution round *our English* shores,'

is much helped therein, by the fact that all the garbage that floats out to sea and would infallibly be returned to the shore by the next tide is disposed of by these voracious birds, and thus many a creek and harbour is by them rendered sanitary, that would otherwise breed pestilence, or at the least become offensive and horrible to the senses. Nor is it only as seashore scavengers these gulls are our friends; they are, as every fisherman can tell, invaluable sentinels for the prey by which he earns his daily bread. A school of herring would many a time pass by unnoticed if it were not for these swift-eyed, swift-winged watchmen of the sea. I say nothing of the glory and life that these gifts of God add to our coasts. Whether they be swinging out and in to the red cliffs of St. Bees and 'Tomlin Head,' or 'dapple the fallows' behind the plowman far inland, these beneficent creatures—these friends of the fisher and the farmer—are so full of grace they need no one to plead for their beauty's sake. But the effect of a cowardly shot that kills or cripples and leads to torture and drowning one of these friends of man from the sea, does not cease with the seagull's life. It hurts our English character. It hardens a human heart, and dwarfs that power of pity by which men grow in likeness to their Saviour, and become as the angels of God."

To Poultry Lovers.—Being a farmer's daughter I was interested to find in the *Leeds Mercury* for February 13 an article on a series of lectures being given at the Yorkshire College, under the auspices of the Board of Agriculture on Dairy-work and Poultry-rearing. Fifteen lectures are to be given on poultry-keeping in all its branches—breeding, housing, hatching, feeding, fattening, killing and marketing. One of the representatives of the *Mercury* had had an interview with the lecturer, and I read with interest of the incubators and brooders, the artificial appliances for breeding and rearing chickens. Then came the following paragraph, which I must admit was a revelation to me: "When the chickens are fit to be fattened, the *cramming machine* comes into use. I will show you how that is worked. Here it is. This vessel on the top contains the food; below it is a cylinder worked by a foot-lever; and here is an india-rubber tube attached to the cylinder. In order to cram the bird, you open its mouth, push the tube down its throat into the crop, and with your foot on the lever, inject as much food into the crop as you think proper. The fattening process occupies about three weeks. If it is continued longer the bird begins to sicken." I should think so indeed, poor thing! The wonder is it does not sicken before! To me this seems a most inhuman and cruel mode of procedure. Certainly *most* unnatural, and I should much like to know if it is carried on to any extent among poultry-rearers. I was horrified some time ago to learn that fowls were frequently *plucked alive*, because the flesh was much whiter in consequence. I have only known personally of one such case, and when discovered by the lady who sent her poultry to the woman to dress, I need not say it was very speedily stopped, and the woman herself thoroughly terrified by the prospect of a raid of policemen and authorities from various humane societies to inspect her premises. Since then I have found by inquiry that such a cruel practice is by no means uncommon. Surely if the English poultry-buying public were aware of such customs they would refuse to patronise the perpetrators of such barbarity.

L. HINCHCLIFF.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Early Appearance of Viper.—My friend Dr. Hawkins, of Abbotsbury (Dorset), writes that he saw the first viper of this year on February 8, basking in the sun on some twigs and dead leaves in Litton Lane, near that village. It was much like its temporary couch in colour. The black markings down the back assist the protective resemblance, as does the greater dulness of the winter hues, compared with those of summer. The earliest date for a viper's appearance previously known to me is February 22—Gilbert White's record.

WILLIAM WHITWELL.

Do Snails Squeak? (pp. 17, 57).—Some years ago I waged war with snails at Selborne. They lived among the roots of the ivy on an old wall, within a stone's throw of Gilbert White's house, and wantonly devoured the tender plants in our garden. They often squeaked from fear (?) when I picked them up, and once when they were put into a basin, and boiling water was poured upon them (I was assured that this was a quick and merciful death), they squeaked from pain. This sound is quite different from that made by them when they are passing across a window. Will some one tell us *how* snails squeak?

Eastbourne. ARTHUR H. COURTHOPE.

We are often amused by the shrill "squeak" of snails, but have always concluded that it was produced in the way which Mr. R. F. Towndrow suggests, as it is always on a wet pane of glass, and never at any other time. At night it is very suggestive of the extraction of a pane of glass by a burglar with a diamond; not at all like a "wail."

M. S. Y.

Hares.—The hare is always considered to be timid, and anyone observant of her habits will think so, but the following instance of her want of cuteness, as told by my cousin's keeper, is new to me. At Pensford village, a few miles from Bristol, the railway crosses the valley on arches, the viaduct having low parapet walls. Hares from the adjoining preserves frequently stray along the line, and on the approach of a train will leap over the parapet, thinking there is level ground on the other side—of course to be picked up dead by the villagers. It would be interesting to know if a fox would act in this way, or be sharp enough to remain on top of the wall, or crouch down beside it.

Post Bridge, Dartmoor. GILES A. DAUBENY.

Otters.—It is well known that salmon must leave the sea for the purpose of depositing their spawn, and that they must return to the salt water to recruit their strength after that exhausting process. If these migrations were neglected, or unduly interfered with, in the process of time salmon would cease to exist. I think many salmon are so constituted as to be disinclined to fall in with these migrations, which are necessary for the continuation of their race. Some would prefer to remain in the sea, and deposit their spawn there. Nature, however, comes to the rescue, and forces the fish into fresh water. A louse, which infests the salmon when in the sea, causes him such irritation that he seeks the fresh water to avoid his tormentors. After spawning, the fish become enfeebled and languid; they seek the quiet and repose of deep, still pools, where they often stay, too weak to wish to return to the sea, to become diseased, and die. Here it seems to me that nature again interferes and provides a means of driving them off from this quiet indolent rife. I think the otter is the agent. If a salmon pool be visited by otters, and the lazy salmon hustled, then they must stir themselves, and make an effort to get to the sea sooner than they otherwise would have done; and many a fish that would have stayed too long in the rivers, by means of the otter goes down to the sea, to return again increased enormously in size and condition. Otters will feed on almost anything. They eat frogs, birds, fish, *et id genus omne*, but of nothing are they more fond than an eel; for this they will give up the finest and most fresh run salmon. The special use of the otter that I have mentioned is, I think, little known, and if its publication in NATURE NOTES will contribute to lessen the persecution he now undergoes, I shall be pleased indeed.

Post Bridge, Dartmoor. EDMUND THOS. DAUBENY.

Strange Playmates.—In a field near my garden a cow and sheep live in close companionship. The sheep was brought from the Fells sick from water in the head, and not worth three and sixpence—so its owner said. However, he successfully operated upon it, turned it into the field, where it became fat and strong. I watched it one evening playing with the cow. It gambolled round it like a dog; then going to a distance, made a "butt" at the cow's head, which was lowered to receive the charge. Then they stood a while with heads close together, presently resuming their play. Jesse has shown in his "Gleanings" how the instinct of friendship exists in animals.

Alston, Cumberland. I. E. PAGE.

Summer Migrants.—The following birds have come under observation on dates respectively:—Chiffchaff, March 25; willow-wren, April 5; ring ouzel, April 8; blackcap, April 8; titlark, April 8; redstart, April 8; cuckoo, April 9; swallow, April 12; whitethroat, April 13. It would be interesting to have records of the arrivals from different localities for comparison.

Astwood Bank, Worcestershire. JAS. HIAM.

The Return Home of the Autumn Migrants.—May I ask your South Wales subscribers to mention the dates of arrival on their shores of the martins and swallows? In that sheltered corner of West Somerset bounded by the Quantock and Brendon Hills and the sea, the martins were first seen this year on April 4, and on April 8 the sand-martins were also numerous. I have seen these birds departing in the autumn—wind strong from the west—in a south-east direction. They probably arrive in April from the same point of the compass. They are usually noted here in considerable numbers, and I think it may be owing to the check they receive from the Bristol Channel inclining them to rest along the Somerset and Devon coast, thus placing them more in evidence. The chiff-chaff was here on March 22, the wheatear on April 1, and the cuckoo on April 8. The warblers I did not notice so early as usual. Welcome all!

Weston-super-Mare. T. P.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. T.—It is the Morel (*Morchella esculenta*), one of the best of our edible fungi.

Mrs. G.—Kindly refer to our Rule 5.

L. F. M.—The plant with sessile leaves *Lamium amplexicaule*: the other probably *L. incisum*, but owing to delay caused by our absence from home the specimens were much withered when we saw them.

We must again express to our correspondents our regret for the delay of many communications.

WE MUST REQUEST THOSE WHO FAVOUR US WITH THEIR COMMUNICATIONS TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Magazine Fund.—The Fund towards clearing off the debt of £70 due to the Hon. Treasurer has now reached within a few pounds of the amount required. The following members have sent in donations between February 15 and April 15:—Miss Wake, Mrs. Payne (further donation from Rape of Lewes Branch), Mrs. A. H. Harman, Mr. J. Hopkinson, F.L.S., &c., Mr. T. Chapman, and an anonymous contributor. The Council venture to hope that those members who have not yet contributed will kindly do so before the next issue, as they are anxious to close the Fund.

Removal of Offices.—Members are reminded that the Society has now removed to 20, Hanover Square, W., to which address all communications must be sent.

Magazine and Leaflet Committee.—The following Resolution was passed at the Council Meeting on March 7:—"That the Magazine Committee be called 'The Magazine and Leaflet Committee' and a fund be opened, termed the 'Leaflet Fund' (for which donations are earnestly requested), for printing leaflets dealing with any of the Society's objects, for gratuitous distribution." It is hoped that this will result in extending the work of the Society and Branches very materially.

Field Club Meetings.—Members who wish to join the Field Club can do so on payment of one shilling for the year. Those who do not belong to the Lower Lea or Lower Thames Valley Branches (which have their own clubs) should send this amount to the Hon. Sec., Central Field Club, 20, Hanover Square, W.

PROGRAMME FOR MAY.

May 5.—Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park. Meet at Putney station, S.W.R., 2.51 p.m. (Waterloo 2.30 p.m.). Paper by Mr. Wakefield.

May 19.—Chingford to Chigwell, by meadow and stream. Meet at Chingford station, 3.8 p.m. (Liverpool Street, 2.32 p.m.). Paper by Mr. W. B. Gerish.

May 26.—Feltham to Ashford. Meet at Feltham station, 2.40 p.m. (Waterloo, 2.10 p.m.). Paper by Mr. R. Marshman Wattson.

June 2. *Altered Arrangements.*—This has been altered to Pinner, through Oxhey Woods to Watford. Baker Street (Met. Ext.), 2.37 p.m.; Richmond, about 2 p.m.; Dalston, 1.45 p.m. Meet at Pinner station (Met. Ext.), 3.10 p.m. Pinner, L. & N.W.R., is fifteen minutes' walk therefrom. A paper will be read.

Conversazione.—The Conversazione Committee have pleasure in announcing an excellent Programme of Music, Vocal and Instrumental, Natural History Exhibits and Microscopes, also an address by Sir John Lubbock, for May 30, from 7 to 10 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. Tickets, programmes, and all particulars may be obtained of the Hon. Sec., Conversazione Committee, 20, Hanover Square, W.

The next meetings of the Council will be held at 20, Hanover Square, on May 2 and June 6. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee meet on May 16 at 5.30.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Lower Thames Valley.—The Hon. Sec. reports, with respect to Sheen Common, the Managers have promised that the destruction of furze and bracken shall cease. It is hoped that the Common will be taken over ere long by the Local Authorities.

New Branch.—A Branch is in process of formation at Nelson, New Zealand, Mrs. A. H. Patterson being the Hon. Sec., *pro tem.*

Communications.—All notes for this page must be sent to the Hon. Sec., Magazine and Leaflet Committee, 20, Hanover Square, W. before May 15, to be inserted in next issue.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 54. JUNE, 1894. Vol. V.

THE PILL-MEN IN THE PILLORY.

THE following extracts, from Lord Rosebery's speech at the Royal Academy Banquet on May 6, deserve a corner in Nature Notes:—

"I am seriously concerned for the prospects of landscape painting in this country. . . . . The other day, on returning from Manchester, I was deeply and hideously impressed with the fact that all along that line of railway which we traversed, the whole of a pleasing landscape was entirely ruined by appeals to the public to save their constitution, but ruin their æsthetic sense, by a constant application to a particular form of pill. I view that prospect with the greatest misgiving. What is to become of our English landscape if it is to be simply a sanitary or advertising appliance? I appeal to my right hon. friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy, who sits opposite to me. His whole heart is bound up in a proposition for obtaining free access to the mountains of the Highlands. But what advantage will it be to him, or to those whose cause he so justly and eloquently espouses, if at the top of Shehallion, or any other mountain which you may have in your mind's eye, the bewildered climber can only find an advertisement of some remedy of the description which I have mentioned? . . . . . But I turned my eyes mentally from the land, and I say that, after all, the great painter of the present may turn to the sea, and there, at least, he is safe. There are effects on the ocean which no one can ruin, and not even a pill can impair. But I was informed in confidence—it caused me some distress—that the same enterprising firm which has placarded our rural recesses has offered a mainsail free of expense to every ship that will accept it, on condition that it bears the same hideous legend upon it to which I have referred. Think of the feelings of the illustrious Turner if he returned to life to see the luggers and the coasting ships which he has made so glorious in his paintings converted into a simple vehicle for the advertisement of a quack medicine—although I will not say 'quack' because that is actionable—I will say of a medicine of which I do not know the properties. But I turn my eyes beyond the land and ocean, and I turn them to the heavens and I say, 'There, at any rate, we are safe.' The painter of the present might turn his eye from the land and ocean, but in the skies he can always find some great effect which cannot be polluted. At this moment I looked from the railway-carriage window, and I saw the skeleton of a gigantic tower arising. It had apparently been abandoned at a lofty stage, possibly in consequence of the workmen having found that they spoke different languages at the point at which they had arrived. I made inquiries, and I found that it was the enterprise of a great speculator, who resides himself on a

mountain, and who is equally prepared to bore under the ocean or ascend into the heavens. I was given to understand that this admirable erection comprised all the delights of a celestial occupation without any detachment from terrestrial pursuits. But I am bound to say that if buildings of that kind are to cover this country, and if they are to be joined to the advertising efforts to which I have alluded, neither earth, nor sea, nor sky in Great Britain will be fit subject for any painter."

The *Westminster Gazette* interviewed representatives of the principal offenders alluded to, and published the result in an interesting article with the heading which we have adopted above. It is gratifying and surprising to learn that one of the pill firms—the originator of this form of outrage in England—is going to withdraw the objectionable advertisements.

"When introducing this form of advertisement," said its representative, "we had not the slightest notion that the public feeling would go so strongly against it. In order, therefore, not to give offence, we shall discontinue every one of our field advertisements as soon as our lease is run out. And this brings me to another point. Lord Rosebery is wrong in throwing the blame on the advertiser. The man who is chiefly to blame is his own countryman, the British farmer, who is only too eager and willing to let space in his fields to us for advertising purposes. He takes our money thankfully, and he makes this form of advertisement rather expensive, for he lets his space to us only on a three years' lease. The rent is expensive and the boards are expensive, so that altogether we pay the British farmer well. But as I said, we mean to give in to the voice of the public and withdraw all our advertisements of this kind at the expiration of our lease."

The other firm remains obdurately Philistine. The representative will not even "admit that we obstruct any view." "Only one half admission," says the Westminster correspondent, "was I able to extract. I put it to him, as a man and a brother, that his advertising boards could not after all but be deemed unmitigatedly ugly."

Quoth he—"I certainly would not like to live opposite one myself; but simply as a matter of passing them in a train I see no possible objection; and I think, moreover, Lord Rosebery has very much exaggerated the thing."

The only crumb of comfort gained during the interview was the announcement that the disfigurement of sailing boats is not to be extended.

The National Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising must, therefore, press forward its proposed measures. It must first of all, however, find for itself a name which can be used in ordinary speech, for no body with so portentous a title can ever become popular.

Birds with Long Beaks (pp. 39, 58).—In December, 1891, I caught a bluetit which had a beak similar to that of a parrot. The upper mandible, which was nearly half-an-inch long, curved over the lower one. This curious appendage did not seem to inconvenience the bird in the least. This specimen, unfortunately, died a few days later, and so I was not able to observe any peculiar habits resulting from this singular growth. The same winter I caught a robin which had part of the lower mandible torn off. Is it known exactly how long a bird's beak would take to grow under such circumstances?

Reading. GEO. H. SHEPLEY.

BIRD-LIFE IN LONDON.

IN walking about London, it is well to note, when we come to any open spaces, what various objects of bird-life may be caught by the observing eye. Just as it adds to the interest of the often crowded streets to recall their associations in literature and history—to look up, as we pass, and say, as noted by tablets in the walls, here was born, or here lodged, Byron; here dwelt Sheridan, or Swift, or Turner; here lived and died the illustrious Handel—so is it of equal, if not greater interest, to watch the ever-varying life of the birds. To the lover of London, St. James's Street is a mine of memories, a steady source of never-wearying delight; it recalls to him the time when the street was the centre of everything social, and brilliant, and witty, and wicked, in the whole world of London. And St. James's Park is even more interesting still. There, we have not only the very spots where King Charles the Easy loved to wander, but the descendants of the very ducks which the good-humoured king loved to feed. Rochester's witty epitaph says of him, we know, that

> "Here lies our sovereign Lord the King,
> Whose word no one relies on;
> Who never said a foolish thing,
> And never did a wise one."

To this I would say that he did one wise thing in bequeathing to us these ducks—I use the word to designate the whole of the feathered swimming-tribe—which have been fed, and petted, and loved, by children of all growths, down to this day. The very sparrows, too, which will now almost come to eat out of your hand, are no doubt lineal descendants of sparrows which have been so fed for ages long gone by.

During the past winter, sea-gulls have been coming in large numbers to the lake in the park. In storms I have seen them often flying high against the wind, while at other times they have been resting quietly on the lake. On January 14th of this year the weather was warm; and as I walked across the park at twelve o'clock, I saw a fine flock of sea-gulls near the bridge. About February 17 there had been some days of frost, and the lake in the park had been frozen over; but on Friday the ice was breaking up, and at one o'clock on Saturday only a slender sheet was left over about half the lake. On this half a fine flock of nearly a hundred sea-gulls was perched, now and then swimming in the water after pieces of bread that had been thrown to the ducks, and seeming quite at home.

One day in early autumn, a beautiful canary had escaped into one of the enclosures, and several gardeners and keepers were after it with a cage, vainly, so long as I saw, trying to catch the bird. At another time I saw a fine merry magpie, enjoying himself, and delighting the visitors, among the trees; and

there I saw him, day by day, for some time, seeming to enjoy the fun of the utterly futile attempts to catch him. This bird, I learnt, had escaped from a caged pair on the lower of the two islands in the lake, and though he visits his wife pretty often, I am told that the keepers have never, even yet, been able to tempt him to share her confinement.

Thrushes of two kinds are numerous; the blackbird often sings gloriously; and linnets and other small birds abound. Now and then one sees and hears some fine parrot, seated on a pleasant tree-perch, escaped from domestic pettings, and here enjoying himself till he is encaged again. On the lower island they have a smallish dove—what it is I do not know—which, I am told, breeds there, but does not fly much about the park. The turtle-dove I do not think I have ever seen in the park. In this early season it has been interesting to watch the sparrows building in the leafless Lombardy poplars by the lake, their many nests soon to be hidden by the fast-springing foliage.

About a month ago, a ring-dove began to build her slender nest in a hawthorn tree, and she has been now for more than a week sitting on her eggs. There she sits, not far from Marlborough House and the Old Palace, close to the broad asphalted walk crossed by thousands during the day; and there nobody, so far as I can see, seems to notice her, though she far oversits the rag of a nest through the sticks of which one can almost see the eggs. One morning I saw a large number of people gathered just under the nest, but all were looking at a regiment of soldiers marching with band past Buckingham Palace across the edge of the park. In a few days the nest will, I hope, be shrouded by the leaves. Up to Saturday, April 7, the bird was sitting with her head towards the east wind and the Horse Guards; but on the Monday, with the change of wind, the bird's head had turned towards Buckingham Palace and the west. This is the bird usually known as the wood-pigeon, which figures in poetry as the cushat dove. Thus it is called, for instance, in the beautiful description of summer-dawn on Loch Katrine in the beginning of the third canto of the "Lady of the Lake." This is an extract from Scott's description:—

> "Invisible in flecked sky,
> The lark sent down her revelry;
> The blackbird and the speckled thrush
> Good morrow gave from brake and bush;
> In answer coo'd the cushat dove
> Her notes of peace and rest and love."

It is strange that, in this beautiful passage, Scott, a careful observer, has made the *female* bird the singer. The same thing is done, too, by the peasant-poet, Clare, who, having been in early life a plough-boy, should have known all about the bird-life of the fields. This, besides in other places, he does in that lovely Shakespearian sonnet on the thrush's nest, of which these are a few lines:—

"I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns of rapture, while I drank the sound
With joy ; and oft, an unintending guest
I watched her secret toils from day to day :
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,
And modelled it within with wood and clay."

But I believe I am right in saying that in the bird-world, save, perhaps, in the case where (like the domestic hen) the female almost entirely undertakes the bringing up of the young, the male is the talkative member of the family, and the silent one is the female! Poetasters seem to like to depict the female bird as the rapturous singer ; but if, as I think is the case, I am right in my contention that, among birds, the female sex is deficient in song, and the males alone are gifted with singing powers, it is rather strange to find such errors in poets like Clare and Scott.

From my earliest childhood, I have been quite familiar with bird-life. My father was a lover of birds ; and I was born and spent my early years in a sea-side and woodland district of Devonshire which, being then quite out of the world, was a perfect paradise of feathered songsters: where, save the nightingale—at whose absence from the region I have often wondered—we had, I think, nearly every bird that comes to our shores. One of my earliest boyish feats, in which I was proud to be told I was very skilful, was that "hooting to the owls," such as Wordsworth describes in these lines :—

"At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake.
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him : and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his peal, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled ; concourse wild
Of jocund mirth and din."

More interesting than this, and even more certain of response, were the mimic cooings to the ring-doves, made by putting my hands in a different way. To these cooings the doves would answer, higher and still higher, till they became quite excited over the mimic contest. As bearing on the sense of fun in birds, to which references have been made in this Magazine, I used sometimes to think the birds enjoyed the contest, just as two boys would do in cooing to each other. Often, when the cushat doves have been cooing over my head in St. James's Park, I have been sorely tempted to try my boyish feats, and see whether the doves would coo to me still.

Several times have I seen summer dawn on Loch Katrine; and many a time should I like to see this lovely sight again. That lake, however, is at a distance; to see it I should have to travel far; but St. James's lake is close at hand, in the very heart of London; beside this lake, or around it, I walk every day, sometimes near summer's dawn, sometimes so late at night, or in so thick a darkness, that I think it well to keep a sharp look out on the bridge, where the hero of a modern novel, who was fond of looking over the lake, was waylaid and almost murdered by an assassin.

About other parts of London I might say much, but this single part in its very centre may well stand alone: in my view, it is quite worthy so to do. And if we went on to what is soon, we are told, to be an integral part of London, I might tell how, one fine summer's afternoon, in a remote part of Kew Gardens, I saw a fine young cuckoo perch on a branch near my head, followed and tended by two little foster-parents of hedge-warblers, who fussed about in apparent perplexity, at their large and hungry offspring, and seemed half-starved by their exertions; and how I called the attention of two ladies sitting near, to a sight which, they said, they had never heard of, and might, I thought, never see again.

To that I might add my yearly rambles in Richmond Park, to watch the first return of the spring migrants; how that Sheen Common, now, it is hoped, to be preserved by the exertions of the Selborne Society, used to be the earliest place to find some of them; how that last year, I first heard, on April 16, what Wordsworth calls that "thrice welcome darling of the spring," the cuckoo, and how that this year, on April 8, I first *saw* one cuckoo flying from tree to tree, but not singing—if the voice may be so called—but that later the same day, I saw two cuckoos on the same tree, one speaking and the other silent.

But the dwellers in royal Richmond, official Kew, and pleasant Petersham, now united in one well-governed borough, hardly like yet to allow themselves to be ranked as dwellers in London; so I forbear. Enough has, however, been brought forward, I trust, to show that London is really a city to be proud of, and that enough in abundance to justify this may be found, if we will but look around for it.

W. J. C. MILLER.

The Paragon, Richmond.

Dog and Dove (p. 58).—Some years ago we had a dove, and at certain times of the day it was let out of its cage for a little exercise. It used to have great fun with a cat and dog which we kept. The dove would go and peck the cat, and the cat in turn would pat the dove gently with its paw. They used to play away till they got tired, when the cat and dog went to sleep, and the dove flew back to its cage.

ROBERT F. MCCONNELL.

ST. JOHN'S WORT.*

TOWARDS the end of June the little golden suns of the greater St. John's wort are to be seen with their halves of fine red-tipped stamens and glistening petals, set in a setting of dull green leaves. They grow on a high bank in an unfrequented lane, and it is a yearly custom of mine to visit this lane on Midsummer Eve and to gather the aromatic leaves and flowers; partly for the sake of an old friend who manufactures a certain healing lotion from the resinous plant, but more particularly from a simple love of the beautiful flower itself—

> "Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
> Of flowers, like flies, clothing her slender rods
> That scarce a leaf appears."

But Cowper's lines more accurately describe the true St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), so common by our roadsides and field-borders; and, indeed, it is this with which the old customs are associated. My particular flowers are of purest yellow, except for a short time when the reddish pollen is thick upon their stamens, and year after year they make their appearance in the deep green lane, which I like to think is only known to myself.

With careful fingers I gathered my little golden suns, and as I strolled slowly homewards in the sweet twilight all the old tales and associations connected with the St. John's worts came thronging into my mind. But especially my thoughts went back to the old Pagan days when blooming at the summer solstice, the day dedicated to the sun in heathen mythology, they became the symbolical plants of the time. They belonged to Baldur the Beautiful, the Sun-god, the Apollo of the north, and in those days were known by his name. But with Christianity came new associations. The summer solstice was now dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and the sacred plant was no longer called Baldur's flower, or Baldur's blood, but was named after the saint who first brought the light of saving grace to a world sunk in darkness. The bright and undefiled flames of the great prophet's watch-fires were seen imaged in the Hypericum's golden bloom, and Columba, the apostle of Iona, who had much in common with St. John the Baptist, also loved this flower so well that it became known among the Gaels of Ireland and Scotland as "the herb which St. Columba carried," or as St. Columba's wort (*Beach nuadh Columcille*).

The sacred plant of heathen mythology was now the sacred plant of Christendom, and in many countries was held as a safeguard against the approaches of evil. In the Netherlands, it

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* *Hypericum calycinum*.

was believed, and perhaps is still believed, that a sprig of St. John's wort gathered before sunrise would protect a house from being struck by lightning; and in Norway and Sweden, as well as in Germany, bunches of St. John's wort were gathered on St. John's eve and hung above doorways, or placed upon roofs, as a protection against witches. The same custom held good in England, and the sunny flowers that so gaily decked the houses on the eve of St. John, both in town and country, were lighted up by the blazing midsummer fires. Barnaby Googe says:—

> "Then doth the joyfull feast of John the Baptist take his turne,
> When bonfiers great, with loftie flame, in every towne doe burne;
> And yong men round about with maides doe daunce in every streete,
> With garlands wrought of motherwort, or else with vervain sweete."

It is most interesting to trace the universal connexion of the idea of light and of fire with the festival of St. John—the prophet of fire. Even on this evening, as I drew nearer to the village that was my destination, I heard a sudden sound of shouting, and saw the blaze of a bonfire that had been kindled on a bit of waste land by some of the village boys. I cannot say that it was anything but a coincidence, the boys were guiltless of any thought or desire of keeping up an old custom, but as I watched the flames and smoke mounting up, it was not difficult to imagine myself back in those days, when, as we are told:*—

"In worshyp of Saint Johan the people waked at home, and made three maner of fyres: one was clene bones and noo woode, and that is called a bonefyre; another is clene woode and no bones, and that is called a wood-fyre; the third is made of wode and bones, and it is called Saynt Johannys fyre. . . . . The seconde fyre was made of woode, for that wyll brenne lyght and wyll be seen farre. For it is the chefe of fyre to be seen farre, and betokennynge that Saynt Johan was a lanterne of lyght to the people. Also the people made blases of fyre, for that they shoulde be seene farre, and specyally in the nyght, in token of St. Johan's having been seen from far in the spirit by Jeremiah. The third fyre of bones betokenneth Johan's martyrdom, for hys bones were brente."

For many centuries the bonfires of St. John's eve were held in the greatest esteem, and like the flowers of the St. John's wort were supposed to dispel every kind of evil. And there seem to be traces of the same idea, as regards the efficacy of fire-lighting, in the midsummer watches, when processions of constables and others marched through the streets of London with lighted cressets, and also in the illumination of the houses.

"On the vigil of St. John Baptist," writes Stowe, "every man's doore being shadowed with green birch, long fennel, St.

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* [Brand quotes this "from the Homily *De Festo Sancti Johannis Baptistæ*," but gives no further clue by which it may be traced.—Ed. *N. N.*]

John's wort, orpin, white lilies, and such like, garnished upon with garlands of beautifull flowers, had also lamps of glasse, with oyle burning in them all the night: some hung out branches of iron, curiously wrought, containing hundreds of lamps lighted at once."

In imagination I walked through the streets of London, with the bonfires blazing up on every side, whilst down each thoroughfare poured the long procession of the watch, with their flaring cressets; the hundreds of little lamps twinkled like stars above the gateways and dark entrys, and golden sheaves of St. John's wort waved above each door! Then I glanced down at the flowers I held in my hands. Here, at least, was an earnest of the past; and so long as the flowers of St. John open their bright buds, the customs of our forefathers on the vigil of his festival can surely never pass altogether out of mind.

I could still see the smouldering glow of the bonfire, but the shouting was over, and not a sound broke the stillness except the occasional sleepy chirp of a startled bird, or the shrill, almost imperceptible cry of a bat flitting by in grey transparency. Half-dried grass and drooping daisies lay in long ridges in the deserted hay-fields, and pale fingers of honeysuckle could dimly be seen in the luxuriant hedgerows, and the sweet circles of wild roses. The scent of the newly-mown hay, of honeysuckle and sweetbriar, filled the air, and the dewy freshness of night descended upon the quiet country. Presently a star appeared in the tender blueness of the sky, whilst a glow-worm lighted its lamp for my benefit in the grass by the wayside. Johannis gleimchen—Johannis würmchen!

C. H.

Exmouth, S. Devon.

NOVEMBER IN NEW ZEALAND.

THIS is the busiest month of the year, the period in which the wool harvest is gathered. Usually the weather is dry, but this month has been an exception to the rule, and continuous rain has brought on weeds of all kinds. Piripiri is one of the worst of these. It is a burr growing a few inches high; the seed is armed with barbed hooks that cling to the wool, and this season owing to the long shearing in certain parts the still unclipped sheep are quite red along the neck and sides. Long-haired collies, too, get very much plastered with it. We have three varieties of piripiri, one rather a handsome plant with a larger head and purple-coloured hooks. Owing to its barbed seeds this weed spreads very fast on newly broken in ground. Other plants of the same nature such as the

"Bathurst burr" from Australia and several trefoils fortunately ripen too late to damage the interests of flock-masters.

In the garden this year the caterpillars and slugs are more numerous than I have ever seen them before. During some seasons the former do great harm to the grass seed crops. At times even they are numerous enough to stop the railway trains, the wheels refusing to bite on the slippery rails. It is wonderful, however, how soon a norwester with sun dries them up. Slugs, too, are withered up by the heat. These creatures seem to have a certain amount of sense. For a few evenings I had been killing them by candle light in the flower beds, and after one or two nights the light was a signal for general retreat. The survivors had apparently learnt a lesson. Although neighbours on three sides are bothered with snails none have yet arrived here. In some parts after great heat I have seen them lying like dropped fruit quite dead. None of the British butterflies have appeared yet in the colony. The codlin moth, however, is destructive to the orchards, and there is a bee moth very much like the English species. Fruit cases carry all sorts of vermin. Last winter a poisonous viper arrived at Napier safe and sound in a banana box. Our native butterflies on the run are rare, and except the Painted Lady and one other they are insignificant in size. A small blue variety is plentiful on the drying mud of lagoons.

During the few fine days we have had, numbers of other insects may be seen enjoying themselves in the warmth. Big pale green locusts are numerous, flying in a clumsy or zigzag manner, and at the close of their short journey rather tumbling than alighting. Now that flights of starlings have appeared on the run, it is probable that locusts, grasshoppers, &c., will diminish. The angling in some of the southern rivers has, I believe, been quite spoiled by the starlings. They devour the locusts' eggs deposited on the plains and thereby destroy the next season's food for the fish. Darwin has noted the connexion of the red clover, the humble-bee, the field mouse, and the owl. In the case of the starlings and trout it would seem at first impossible that the number and condition of the fish should depend upon the quantity of the birds.

The large dragon-flies now plentiful are very bold and inquisitive, coming up for a thorough inspection with a dart and crackle of their gauzy wings. Besides honey-bees they devour the green beetles that swarm at this season; they are cannibals too on occasion. Besides the green we have brown beetles; the latter at this season are very destructive to the tender shoots of willows, tutu, and orchards generally. The month has been a bad one for bee-keepers. Manuka, flax and clover are perhaps the sources from which the greatest quantity of honey is collected. Thistles also provide an immense amount of pollen and honey. Throughout the year, too, there are trees blossoming in the bush. The nectar of the flax produces a thick honey very

difficult to extract. The flower stems are often fifteen or seventeen feet in height and impart a reddish brown tinge to the swamps where they grow. During the blossoming time the native children are fond of drinking the sweet liquid from the flowers. In this operation they get their brown faces well yellowed by the plentiful pollen. Most of this plant has been destroyed on the run by fires and drainage of swamps, but in the old days its touch fibre served the natives for scores of purposes. One of the things that chiefly surprised the Maories in hearing about England was the absence of flax. "What! a country without flax! How can people live in such a land?" they would exclaim. During the last few years the real flax with its pale blue sun-sensitive flower has rapidly spread. There is also a wild pure white variety on the run: it is not increasing.

With a good climate and plentiful food supply the difficulty in bee-keeping is to prevent constant swarming. The hives used are chiefly Zangstroth. "Such results as 300, 400, or even 500 lbs. of extracted honey from one hive in a good season are not uncommon or even very rare. An average of 200 lbs. per hive may be often obtained under favourable circumstances and good management." In some parts of New Zealand there are great complaints of the humble-bees recently imported to fertilize the red clover. Apiarists declare that their profits are much diminished. The bot-fly is another insect that has spread very rapidly over the whole of New Zealand. Last year I noticed it on our horses' forelegs, and that summer there were remarks about it from all parts. In the colony we account the changed habits of the Kea parrot very remarkable. This bird, living in the mountains of the South Island, has of late years taken to destroying sheep. One from a flock is selected and hunted till it drops, the back being torn open in the loin. Much has been written on this parrot's change of diet, a change from berries and honey-bearing flowers to raw flesh. Really, however, it is not much more curious than the persistent attacks on man and beast made by the mosquitos in forest districts where neither beast nor man has been before. Horses are often covered with blood by these tiny insects, who never can have had an opportunity of tasting any animal diet previously.

The grasses are flowering now all over the slopes and downs, giving the hill sides from a distance an appearance of hazel they have at no other time. It is produced, I think, by the flower stalks standing forth from the deep green undergrowth of leaf and clover leaf. The thistles are showing their earliest glimpses of purple, and on their prickly buds and leaves the apparently soft and tender-bodied caterpillars move quite unhurt. The hawk-eye, or "cakeweed" as it is called here, is flowering in millions on the poorer lands, closed in rain and at night, and yellow in the sun. Next month the golden blossoms will have failed and the wind-borne seed be sailing everywhere.

H. Guthrie-Smith.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

THE May instalment of *The Country Month by Month* merits similar praise to that which we have bestowed on preceding volumes; and the series, when completed, will form a valuable accession to the Selbornian's library. We note that the Columbine is said to be either "white, dull purple, or light brown," in a wild state. This is contrary to our experience: the plant which grows in the woods of South Buckinghamshire has large bright blue flowers, far more beautiful than those usually met with in gardens. The cautionary note that "the hawthorn may not be open until the middle of the month," was not necessary this year, when it seemed much earlier than other plants; we saw it fairly well in blossom not far from Oxford on April 29th. Something more might have been said about the flowers of the horse chestnut, which are described as "flecked with splashes of pink and lines of yellow;" the distribution of these patches is more regular than the authors seem to have noticed. But these are excellent little books.

Mr. I. W. Tutt's *Random Recollections of Woodland, Fen and Hill* (Sonnenschein, 3s. 6d.) are mainly, though not entirely, entomological, as might be expected from the editor of the *Entomologists' Record*. The author has a fondness for startling titles. "The Escaped Convict," "Why the Negro is Black," "The Love-making of the Ghost," "The Coastguard's Mistake," are the headings of ome of his chapters. He is wrong in supposing that the fritillary butterfly took its name from the resemblance of its markings to those of the flower so called both are to be traced to the Latin *fritillus*. The lady's smock, which to Shakespeare appeared "all silver-white," is "bright pink" or "red," to Mr. Tutt's eye, which suggests that he must be affected with something like colour-blindness. There seems also to be some confusion in the description of the Birdsfoot Trefoil (p. 139). There is, however, a great deal of pleasant and useful reading in the book, although the inelegant arrangement of the "contents" is calculated to prejudice the reader unfavourably. We hope the owner of "the cement works at———" whom the author styles "one of Nature's abortions," is not typical of the kind of person to be met with in rambles in the neighbourhood of Cuxton; although Mr. Tutt tells us that "this type of man is not rare," we are inclined to doubt the accuracy of his statement.

We have from time to time (NATURE NOTES, 1893, pp. 51, 89, 153) called attention to the admirable *Fieldpath Rambles* (R. E. Taylor & Son, 19, Old Street, E.C.), in which Mr. Walker Miles is giving to the public the benefit of his extensive knowledge of the most picturesque districts in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis. Having completed his four series of cross-country routes in West Kent, he has now transferred his sphere of operations to the Surrey Hills. We have received the Fifth Series (*Round Dorking and Box Hill*, price 6d.), and though as yet we have had no opportunity of submitting it to a practical test, we are persuaded by our complete success in tracking out the routes described in the West Kent Series, that the fullest confidence may be placed in the guidance of the author, and that even a total stranger will find it impossible to lose his way. But the precise directions are by no means the only merit of the work. The routes detailed will lead the pedestrian to points of vantage commanding some of the most magnificent scenery in the south of England. Welcome scraps of information on matters of local interest are added, and the text is clearly printed; but we venture to think that the book would benefit by the omission of the red borders to the pages and of the rather crude woodcuts. A. G.

Mr. L. N. Badenoch's *Romance of the Insect World* (Macmillan & Co., 6s.) is a popular work, dealing with metamorphosis, food, hermit homes, social homes and defences of insects, or protection as derived from colour. The illustrations are good and partly original, though some are necessarily copied from other sources, which are acknowledged. There is a glossary of technical terms at the end, and a good index, and it strikes us as a novelty that terms explained in the glossary are marked in the text with an asterisk. The letterpress is fairly well

written, and the best authorities appear to have been consulted, especially for the two last chapters, which deal chiefly with mimicry. In a few cases our author's information will require supplementing by more advanced works, as where he says, "The normal number of distinct rings in all insects is probably thirteen." It strikes us as a little odd to read that pupæ "in many cases recall the condition of a child swathed or bound up as in barbaric fashion." Is Mr. Badenoch aware that the most civilised of the continental nations still swaddle their children?

W. F. K.

SELBORNIANA.

Epping Forest.—The result of a friendly consultation over the question of "thinning out" appears to have been decisively favourable to the practice in vogue. A good deal of nonsense has been talked for several years past on the supposed determination of the Conservators to destroy the virgin woodland, and it is to be hoped that this will now cease. The matter is in the hands of competent persons, and anyone who is familiar with the Forest, and has watched the progress of affairs during the last quarter of a century, must acknowledge that there has been immense improvement during that period.

On April 30 the Essex Field Club met, by appointment, a deputation from the City, and from the Court of Verderers, at Theydon Bois Station. Among those present were Sir John Lubbock, Mr. Bryce, M.P., Mr. Andrew Johnston, Sir T. F. Buxton, and other Essex worthies. A carriage trip was taken *via* Jack's Hill, the Wake Arms, High Beech, Lord's Bushes, to Chingford. The party halted at several places where tree-felling had been undertaken. The longest halt was made at Monk's Wood, where considerable removals have been effected, and where at present many trees are lying felled. Mr. Buxton explained that it was a mistake to suppose that this was a virgin forest, for until within measurable distance of the present time it had been pollarded like the rest of the Forest. That system of pollarding had been continual, and the result of the system had been to leave spear trees. It was absolutely necessary that some of them should be removed, as they had become unsightly and disfigured. Wherever at present there were any openings, the Forest was, by a process of nature, renewing itself. At Lodge Bushes for years past systematised thinning has been carried out, and it was pointed out that at present there is a very luxurious undergrowth, strikingly different from other portions of the Forest where thinning is now being done. Mr. Buxton explained that the Committee hoped by their action in other spots to bring the rest of the Forest ultimately up to the character of Lodge Bushes. After tea at the Chingford Hotel, the Essex Field Club resolved itself into a meeting to deliberate the matter. There was still some little objection remaining to the thinning-out process, but several persons present who had started in the morning with strong prepossessions against it, frankly avowed that there did not seem to have been any excessive clearing, and that there was really nothing to find fault with. Professor Meldola expressed his deliberate conviction that there was a very marked improvement in the appearance of the forest during the last ten or twelve years. The result of the meeting was the passing of the following resolution, supported by forty-one members against eight dissentients:—"That in the opinion of this meeting the general action of the Conservators in the recent thinning has been judicious."

This is, in truth, one of those matters that cannot be made the subject of decision by an indiscriminate public. Forestry is not a game of play, nor even a mere question of taste; it is a science, and one not understood in this country as it should be. The worthy Scotchman (recently deceased) who has been in charge of Epping Forest for so many years, was a fairly competent person, and carried out the wishes of the Conservators, both as to the preventing of damage and the improvement of the woodlands, in a highly creditable manner. The management of Epping Forest has given to all those concerned in it an opportunity of putting

into practice sound principles, and they have made good use of it. Besides the enormous improvement which has resulted from thinning-out, the fresh plantations, some of which are now approaching maturity, are particularly deserving of notice. And this is the proper time to see it all at one phase of "its best," when the leaves are young, and the blossoms are profuse. You must be a frequent visitor to understand all the resources offered here. No one could believe the wealth of blossom, of the crab, the service-tree, the thorn, who had not seen the Forest within the last two or three weeks. Of course, the less distinguishable flowers of the oak and the other forest trees proper are still more abundant. It is only in early May that these things can be examined and enjoyed to perfection.

Walthamstow. EDWARD SMITH.

The Old Deer Park, Richmond.—Visitors to Richmond travelling by road will have noticed an extensive grassy tract or enclosure on the western side of a ha-ha between the Royal Gardens and the town, and opening out widely to the south-west till the river is reached. In it, and to be seen from the road, are the Kew Observatory, and, obscured by private enclosures, the Athletic Ground, the parade used each year by the Yeomanry, Volunteers, the Flower and Horse Shows, &c. It is retained by the Crown, but let out to an inhabitant as grazing land, and sublet to a large golfing club. Across the meadows the sounds of Isleworth bells float, and glimpses of the tower of the church and the roofs of houses may be obtained from the Kew road. Except for the privileged purposes mentioned, this Park has been inaccessible to the general public, a state of things which has been acquiesced in or regarded with indifference till very recently. Before these lines reach the reader, the new lock, foot-bridge, and weir will have been opened with circumstances of pomp and rejoicing to the inhabitants of Isleworth and Richmond. The new bridge is fairly contiguous to the inhabited parts of Isleworth, but the Surrey extremity abuts on a reach of the Thames remote from the business part of Richmond, the primary object of the new weir and bridge being to hold back the waters of the Thames. The importance of the new approach to Richmond from Middlesex, and its bearing upon the use of the Old Deer Park, have only of late been realised.

When the Dysart Trustees brought forward a scheme last year which threatened the view from Richmond Hill, a prominent member of the Town Council and one of the Committee of the local branch of the Selborne Society formulated proposals by which a fund to purchase the threatened ground could be secured by the sale of a portion of the Park for building purposes, among the incidental advantages of which would be the provision of a road giving direct access to the bridge from Richmond across the Park. It was, no doubt, owing to the desire to keep possession of all the open spaces with which Richmond is so well endowed that this scheme fell flat upon the public. The proposals of a syndicate to obtain possession of the park, to be used by them as a source of income, though influentially supported, happily appears to have fallen through. A more recent proposal, submitted to the Town Council by Mr. W. Thompson, seems much more hopeful. This gentleman, who has proved himself to be in thorough accord with the views of the Selborne Society in the many struggles at Richmond, proposes to obtain a lease of the Park from the Crown to the Corporation, chiefly to provide a footpath, but incidentally to provide much-needed playing grounds free to the youths of the neighbourhood, and to sublet to the Golf Club and other Associations now using the park, throwing the remainder open to the public. No better proposals have, so far, been brought forward. As the Richmond Town Council have referred the matter to one of its Committees to report upon, it is to be hoped that some such scheme will be favoured by the Crown, as it is highly desirable that a vast open space of this character should be in the hands of the public authority than that it should be built upon or used as private speculation.

Kew. JOHN ALLEN.

Mr. Henry Smith, F.R.C.S.—We have recently lost a valued contributor by the decease of this eminent surgeon. Mr. Smith was a naturalist of the practical kind, whose writings bore the stamp of actual acquaintance with his topic. He was a particularly close observer of bird-life: during his long residence in London, he seldom failed to make a trip to the Botanic Gardens in the Regent's

Park before breakfast. To this habit alone naturalists owe several notes and memoranda contributed to the *Field* and other journals, which might otherwise have escaped notice, for the number of such observers in London is very rare. Mr. Smith was also a famous trout-fisher. His fernery at Weybridge, of which he was very proud, bespoke an enthusiasm for another branch of natural science in which he likewise displayed a wide and accurate knowledge.

A Selbornian in Greece.—I was sorry, when travelling in Greece a few weeks ago, to come across several instances of domestic animals not being very kindly treated. Donkeys staggered under heavy market loads, and skinny horses felt the whip somewhat frequently, though the poor beasts were doing their level best. I am aware that Pharisaism is an especially British vice, and that we have still a good many beams in our own eyes. I am aware that the Greeks, being, like most southern races, a temperate people, are very sorry for us for needing Bands of Hope. Still, these *povere bestie*, as the gentle-hearted Italians would call them—!

Could not English travellers in Greece make a point of asking those drivers, whose humanity leaves something to be desired, to deal gently with their horses? Could not English residents in Greece—perhaps they do—try and stir feelings of sympathy among boys with animals? At Mycenæ I made the acquaintance of a little white dog—a most sweet person, who understood and talked my language with a good deal more comprehension than his two-legged fellow-countrymen. Yet when my little friend, being hungry at lunch time, came and asked for his share, up rose a two-legged Greek, after the fashion of a Homeric hero, and flung a rock at him!

E. Dixon.

Lost British Birds.—The Society for the Protection of Birds sends us an admirable paper on this subject by Mr. W. H. Hudson. We hope to notice it at length at an early date.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Robins at Kew.—Visitors to the Temperate House, Kew, are often pleased at hearing the song of the robin; one or two couples are found there more or less all the year round, and also rear their young in the house. Your readers will, however, be more interested to hear that last year a robin's nest was found in the grounds, in a golden yew, with four eggs in it. This nest was a source of much interest to one of the constables, who paid frequent visits to it. One day, to his great surprise, he found only one egg in the nest, and this one much larger than the four he had at first seen, and he could not understand how the four eggs had got out of the nest, or where they had got to. But on looking under the yew one day, there were the four missing eggs, and how they had got there was explained on finding a young cuckoo was hatched from the one egg left in the nest. The cuckoo had ousted the robin's eggs, and laid her own in the nest, and in due time the young cuckoo made its appearance, and was tended by the robins until able to fly. Its first essay was to a tree close by; here, said the constable, the thrushes and blackbirds seemed not to know what to make of the strange bird, and pecked at it, but it eventually got away, and he saw no more of it. The constable added, that it was a strong and prettily marked bird.

Kew. Ina Mellor.

A Thoughtful Sheep.—At this season of the year the fields and pastures look more than interesting, dotted over as they are with numerous herds and flocks, the heavily fleeced mothers, with little white innocent-faced lambs gambolling by their side, the objects of tender solicitude to these mothers. Many years ago it came under the notice of the writer to observe a mother with twin lambs, one of which seemed quite different from the other, wandering about

aimlessly, and not as others of the kind. We were not long in discovering the cause—it was blind. The mother and brother were quite alive to the fact, and watched the little one with tender and unwearied care, one or other, as they saw it getting into danger, rushing forward to the rescue, and with a sharp but kindly "butt" turning the little blind one out of danger and into a safer path. Was not something more than instinct developed here?

C. NELSON.

Early Ladybirds.—On Easter Day at this place I noticed a great number of fine and brilliant ladybirds on the soil among the shrubs of the cliff gardens. Is not their appearance on March 25 unusually early?

Westgate-on-Sea. I. B. S. THOMPSON.

Blackcaps in Winter.—During this winter I have been putting out seed on the window sill for the birds, and among those which have come to eat them I have noticed blackcaps, which, I believe, usually migrate in the winter.

St. Wenn, Cornwall. B. S.

Do Snails Squeak? (pp. 17, 57, 98).—For several years I have made it my hobby to collect and study specimens of land and fresh water shells, and I think I may answer "no." Your correspondent, Mr. Courthope (p. 98) does not mention the name of the species to which he alludes; I conclude that it must be *Helix aspersa*. I have examined several hundred specimens of *Helix aspersa* but have never yet had the pleasure of hearing one squeak. I think, however, that I can account for the mistake being made.

A snail, when it is touched, usually retires as quickly as possible into its shell, and consequently in its haste carries in a quantity of dirt adhering to the prostima. This dirt can be hardly comfortable for the animal, and nature has provided it with the power of removing the objection without emerging again from the shell. A quantity of mucus is immediately ejected, and the flow is continued until the animal is ridded of the nuisance. The hasty ejection of this mucus is the cause of what your correspondents call a squeak, but it is nothing more than a light hiss. Then, too, your last correspondent on this subject speaks of their squeaking with pain when immersed in boiling water. This notion is most absurd. I have proved on several occasions that if the temperature of the water is at boiling point, death is *instantaneous*. I have frequently heard the wail that Mr. Towndrow (p. 57) mentions, caused by a snail crawling up a wet window, and have as frequently been surprised at the clear rich note produced.

J. R. LONGHURST.

Eastcote, Hampton Wick.

[Mr. Edward Hawes writes to the same effect: we do not propose to insert further letters on this subject.—*Ed. N.N.*]

Birds Chasing Hawk and Owls.—Some years ago we witnessed an exciting chase of a large hawk—we supposed a falcon—by rooks. The bird was larger than the rooks, and at first rose from the ground so heavily that we thought it must be an owl; but as it rose, and was buffeted by a flock of rooks, it seemed rather to enjoy leading them to a great height, until only two of its enemies persevered, and when they were tired out, it rose still higher and soared away into the distance. We have been much entertained lately by two large brown owls, which come almost every evening about dusk and sit together on the same branch of an acacia tree, very much exciting all the small birds in the neighbourhood, which, however, never attack the owls, but only chatter at them. These owls have, I think, their home in the next orchard, and we hear them hooting at all hours of the day and night, often between 10 and 11 a.m. Is not this a very uncommon occurrence?

M. S. Y.

Teesdalia nudicaulis.—I shall be glad to know if Teesdalia is becoming a more common plant than the books on botany assert. In Bentham's *Botany* it is marked as "not a very common plant," and in Johns' *Flowers of the Field*, "not common." I hailed it as a great treasure when I first found it in South Devon, but since that time I have seen it in many places, and here in Surrey it is nearly as abundant as the common Thale Cress. Some of the

specimens, too, are unusually large. I measured one and found it 14 in. across, 40 in. in circumference. It had nineteen flowering stems, most of them from 7 to 9½ in. in length, and all of them branched into from three to six flower heads, so that the whole plant contained ninety-five flower heads, and as two of the stems had been broken short off there must originally have been at least 100.

Frensham. L. F. M.

Nuthatches (*N.N.*, 1893, p. 224).—I have no doubt that your correspondent F. M. Millard is quite correct with regard to the nuthatch's ordinary method of cracking nuts. I also have been told that it cracks them in the way described (by placing them in the cleft of a tree), but I have never been able to see this for myself, as the nuthatches I wrote about (page 201) always fly off with the nuts in their beaks, out of the garden, towards the adjoining orchards, where they no doubt find a more convenient tree for the purpose. I merely mentioned the fact of seeing the bird fly up to the roof with a nut in its beak, because it happened to be the first occasion that I became aware of the bird's presence in the garden, and I have no explanation to offer of the bird's behaviour in this particular instance, except that possibly even birds sometimes deviate from their ordinary methods of going to work. I can only repeat the fact that I suddenly observed a nuthatch fly up to the roof, from the direction of the place where the nuts were lying on the ground, with what was, to all appearance, one of them in its beak, which it proceeded to strike several times against the brick-work of the chimney, and finally flew off with it—still in its beak—to enjoy, as I thought, the result of its labours. It is quite possible, however, that it had not succeeded in cracking it in this way, and that in reality it flew off with it to a neighbouring tree, where it cracked it in the orthodox fashion.

Since writing the paper referred to, my pair of nuthatches have returned, and are as tame as formerly, carrying off the nuts and crumbs as eagerly as before, when placed for them beneath the windows. We also place nuts in a large square kind of bottle, with wide neck, which we lay lengthwise, to entice them into it the more easily, and they are most excited about the nuts, which are clearly visible through the glass. The cock bird has already summoned up sufficient courage to go in after them, and it is most amusing to watch him taking them out; sometimes he experiences a little difficulty in turning round in the bottle, when, having taken a nut, he wants to come out, but he never drops his nut, but holding tightly to it, he eventually twists himself right round and flies out with it in triumph. His mate, however, has not yet had the courage to go in and get them, but she spends half her time in peering through the glass at them on all sides, and making little attempts at going in, so I have no doubt she will end by doing so.

Sutton Waldron Rectory, Blandford. R. Downing.

Cuckoo in Brighton.—Just before six o'clock this morning (April 15), I awakened thinking I heard the cuckoo. My window being generally wide open at the top, I often hear birds of passage call while passing over the house. I heard nothing more until 6.30 a.m. when my sister, who lives in the country, and is staying with us for a few days, sleeping in a front room, rapped at my door, saying "Come quickly, there is a cuckoo calling loudly on the top of the house." The note seemed peculiarly loud and strong, but it ceased before I could rouse anyone else to hear it. I did not succeed in seeing the bird; it appeared to be on the eave projecting over the middle window. The morning was very damp, and it soon began to rain heavily, so doubtless he flew to a sheltered spot to rest. A little later the bird was heard for some considerable time by my sister, and also by one of the inmates of another house but a few doors distant. The chief point of interest in my account lies in the fact that the cuckoo, a naturally shy and retiring bird, is rarely heard in so populous a neighbourhood as this. My brother heard the cuckoo at Hurst (Sussex), on April 7. The early arrival of the cuckoo this spring cannot fail to attract the attention of naturalists. Gilbert White (according to my edition of 1833), gives April 7 as the earliest date on which the bird appeared in Sussex and Hampshire. This year, if reports in local papers be correct, the cuckoo was

seen near Chichester on March 30, and at several other places in this county on March 31. From the *Brighton Gazette* of the 7th inst., I learn that a pair of cuckoos were observed at Ardeley, Stevenage, on March 22—an exceptionally early date.

Hove, Brighton. M. MORGAN.

Stock-Doves.—These birds were considered by Gilbert White to be winter migrants, and it was a puzzle to him to know where they nested (see Letter LIV.) They are always the *first* birds to nest here, taking to boxes placed up in the trees, in fields or quiet plantations, they being much wilder than their companions the ring-doves. I found the first box-home occupied and sitting on March 5 this year, and the young fledged April 12. In addition to stock-doves, I have had a variety of makeshift homes occupied by the following list, viz.—kestrels, barn-owls, starlings (very numerous), house-sparrows, tree-sparrows, redstarts, fly-catchers, robins, wrens, blue-tits, marsh-tits, great-tits and lesser-spotted woodpeckers. Could we not have a good pattern home called "The Selborne"?

Astwood Bank, Worcestershire. JAS. HIAM.

A Strange Birthplace.—A few days ago I was staying at a farmhouse in this neighbourhood, and was told the following story:—Last summer a pair of starlings built their nest in a very large yew tree in the garden; all went well until the young ones were hatched, and then my friend's cat took a fancy to them, appropriated the nest for herself, and two kittens were born in it. It was noticed for a fortnight that pussy was seldom at home, when one day a violent thunderstorm accompanied by much rain, made her home in the tree very uncomfortable both for herself and little ones. She then brought them down in her mouth, one at a time, and carried them upstairs into her master's bedroom and deposited them upon the hearthrug, very much to the amusement of those who watched her.

Settle, Yorks. JOHN WOLLERTON.

Birds at Window (p. 78).—It is interesting to hear of the existence of any tits that do not attack a coco-nut. The reason may be that the other varieties of food put out for them are more tempting, and if the coco-nut were hung up by itself with no other food near it perhaps the tits would then go to it. My experience is that to hang up a coco-nut means the instant appearance of tits (various kinds), which peck at it all day long and finish the whole nut in about four days. If both ends are sawn off a tit will often be seen clinging to each end at the same time. On the other hand, I wish your correspondent could tell me how to attract nuthatches near the house. I believe there are some in the neighbourhood, but they never appear with other birds to be fed. What kind of nuts do they like best?

Malvern. F. R.

The Daisy a Meadow Plant (p. 95).—Certainly, I should say, unless the term "meadow" is strangely restricted in its application. Nor do I think that even if only the riverside pastures, which in Yorkshire are called "ings," are included under that designation, the daisy could be omitted from the list of their characteristic plants. In my numerous notes of walks over Fulford Ings, Clifton Ings, Middlethorpe Ings, Bootham Stray, Knavesmire, and similar low-lying grass tracts around York, it always finds a place, often with a remark indicating its abundance. The same is the case for Oxford and Abingdon, and their low meadows by the Thames. But a field at Ledsham, near Castleford, in Yorkshire, showed me the daisy in its greatest profusion and beauty. I, at any rate, should call that field a meadow. It was situated at a distance of two miles, perhaps 100 feet above the level of the river Aire. Receiving the drainage, by a gentle slope, from a higher background, it was kept fairly moist. On nearing this field, which is known as Ledsham "Dale," in May, 1883, it seemed as if snow covered from the profusion of daisy flowers in it. Its extent is perhaps six acres; I can but roughly guess. I took some pains to form an estimate of the number of blossoms in that space, and concluded that there could not, after all deductions for sparsely covered parts, be less than three millions visible at once. Indeed, 150 to the

square yard seemed a fair average, and that would work out to a much larger total. Where the flowers were most crowded I put my hat down, and found that it covered fifty of them, which gave rather more than one to each square inch. The same field gave cowslips by hundreds. It lies upon magnesian limestone. At Abbotsbury, in Dorsetshire, I have seen pasture slopes on the lower parts of the downs look equally snow-like with the Ledsham meadow, and from the same cause.

WILLIAM WHITWELL.

Swallows.—I saw a swallow on April 9 near Worcester, sitting on a telegraph wire. I hope other members will mention when and where they first see one, as it is interesting to compare the different dates in different districts.

Malvern. F. R.

London Birds.—A pleasing example of how quickly that naturally shy and timid bird, the wood-pigeon, is becoming indifferent to the noise and crowds of London, can now be seen in the Green Park, Piccadilly, nearly opposite the Navy and Military Club. A pair of these birds have built their nest on the low branch of a tree growing directly over the pavement, within sight of passers by, and hardly beyond reach of stick or umbrella. They are at present sitting closely, and if undisturbed should within a week hatch out their young. Another pair of the same birds have successfully reared a couple of young ones in Berkeley Square. In Grosvenor Square, a blackbird can be heard singing any morning, He is a fine bird and walks about the roadway as fearlessly as a sparrow, but I have not seen his mate or any signs of a nest. A pair of starlings have taken possession of a disused letterbox in Bagshot Park, Surrey, and do not seem the least disturbed by the many pairs of curious eyes which look at them through the slit.

F. W. ASHLEY.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. F.—Scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*).

L. M.—The specimens should have been numbered. The two Cruciferæ are *Farsetia incana* and *Lepidium Draba:* the others are *Euphorbia Esula* and a species of *Alkanna.*

A. R.—We do not know.

H. D. G.—*Stereum rugosum.*

A Correspondent (name mislaid).—The plant sent in a small box is *Claytonia alsinoides.*

Some communications not complying with our rules cannot be further acknowledged.

WE MUST REQUEST THOSE WHO FAVOUR US WITH THEIR COMMUNICATIONS TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING RULES. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the SECRETARY OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Leaflet Fund.—This Fund has been started to print leaflets for gratuitous distribution, dealing with any of the Society's objects. All amounts thus received will be acknowledged on this page, and any suggestions as to suitable leaflets will be gladly received by the Committee.

Proposed Selborne Library.—The Council are arranging for the formation of a library at the Central Rooms, which will be accessible to all members. They are indebted to Miss Gould, of the Northern Heights Branch, for the gift of a Monograph on Swallows, and any gifts of books will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged in this column.

Field Club Meetings.—Members who wish to join the Club, can do so on payment of one shilling. All particulars may be obtained of the Hon. Sec., Central Field Club, 20, Hanover Square, W.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR JUNE.

June 9.—The Brent Valley, Perivale and Horsenden Hill. Meet at Ealing Station (G.W.R.) 3.35 p.m. Broad Street, 2.55 p.m.; Dalston, 3 p.m. (change at Willesden); Richmond, 2.57 p.m. A paper will be read.

June 16.—*Altered arrangements.* Forest walk: Theydon Bois to Ambresbury Banks (British Camp). Meet at Theydon Station at 3.10 p.m. (Liverpool Street at 2.35 p.m.). Paper by Mr. W. B. Gerish.

June 23.—Shepperton. Meet at Shepperton station, S.W.R., 3.30 p.m. (Waterloo 2.35 p.m., Richmond 3.2 p.m.). Papers by Mr. R. Paulson and Mr. R. H. Read.

June 30.—Rye House to Ware by river bank. Meet at Rye House station, 2.57 p.m. (Liverpool Street 2.15 p.m., Clapton 1 p.m.). Paper by Mr. A. T. Dymes.

July 7.—Selborne Society's Special Field Day.—Arrangements are being made to visit Merstham on this date, full particulars of which will be given in our July issue. Professor Boulger has kindly consented to conduct the ramble and deliver a Lecturette on the "Flora of the Chalk Downs."

The Committee of the Field Club meet on June 6, at 6.30, to arrange the Programme for the second half of the Session, July to September.

Council and Committee Meetings.—The next Meetings of the Council will be held on June 6 and July 4, at 5.30 p.m. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee meet on June 20, at 5.30 p.m.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Bath.—The Annual Meeting of this branch was held on May 8, when the Annual Report and Balance Sheet was read and adopted. Owing to the illness and death of the late Secretary, Mr. W. G. Wheatcroft, the branch has had rather a chequered career during the past year, but under the able management of the present Secretary, Dr. G. Norman, who has drawn out a scheme of working the Society by means of sub-branches or districts, to each of which a lady Secretary is appointed, it is believed the present year will prove a much more prosperous one. A Field Club has been formed on the lines of those in London, and it is hoped this may be successful in making the Society better known in the district.

Lower Lea Valley.—By kind permission of Mr. Frederick J. Hanbury, F.L.S., &c., the Members of this Branch spent a very pleasant evening on the 23rd inst., in inspecting Mr. Hanbury's very fine Herbarium and collection of Lepidoptera. Refreshments were generously provided, and the numerous features of interest in the collections were fully described.

Pinner.—By invitation of Mr. and Mrs. George Skilbeck, a most interesting and instructive address on the subject of "Bacteria," dealing with their formation and growth, was given to a large audience by Mr. Kenneth Lawson, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. The lecture was greatly appreciated, and a very hearty vote of thanks was given to the lecturer.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 55. JULY, 1894. Vol. V.

THE BRITISH AVIFAUNA—ITS CHANGES AND PRESENT CHARACTER.

WE have here* such a painful picture of our poverty (and increasing poverty) in wild birds, that some remarks in Nature Notes upon the subject—more especially upon the causes of the change which has come over our avifauna and in defence of it in its modern character—may not be out of place.

Mr. Hudson gives us a sketch of thirteen species of birds which he says are lost to the British avifauna. But he does more than this. He proceeds to belittle our avifauna, and writes of the "hateful monotony which English bird life usually presents" in a way which we are glad to think will not be acquiesced in by the larger proportion of field naturalists who have made the birds of this country their especial study.

To begin with, Mr. Hudson requests us to strike out of the British list (of about 400 species) about 150 wanderers from the distant parts of Europe, from Africa, Asia and America; although many of these are quite likely to be seen by some of our watchful ornithologists in any year. It is strange if some also do not come to us and escape observation. It is very hard to draw the line between passing visitors on migration, and accidental visitors in many cases.

But our author is not content with this lopping off of 150 species. He requires that about twenty more ("only occasional visitors") shall be got rid of in the same summary way. I must really demur to the removal of some of these. It is true that only about thirty-five or forty examples of the woodchat

* *Lost British Birds*, by W. H. Hudson. With fifteen drawings by A. D. McCormick. Published by the Society for the Protection of Birds. Price 6d.

have been procured in England during the century, while ten or a dozen more are said to have been seen. But this is evidence that these islands are perhaps outside, but not far outside, its usual range, and it has even been recorded as breeding on more than one occasion. Of the golden oriole and the hoopoe, however, we must claim that they are almost (if not quite) annual visitors to some part of southern England. The great grey shrike (in one of its forms), although it comes in quite small numbers,* is as much a winter visitor to our shores as the fieldfare: while if we have little hold on the gipsy-like rose-coloured pastor, yet the waxwing and Lapland bunting, *flocks* of which visit and remain with us for a considerable time, may be fairly entitled to have their portraits and descriptions retained in our histories of British birds. Any, or all, of these species are quite likely to visit our shores within the next twelve months; some of them we may be sure will do so. It is neither likely nor desirable that every species of bird should be equally, or nearly equally, numerous in every part of their respective ranges. Indeed if such were the case half the interest of English "bird-men" in their study would be gone; for the possibility and hope of meeting with some local species or some rare wanderer is ever before the field ornithologist.

The weeding-out process, writes Mr. Hudson, "has now brought us down to the species which are actually extinct, and to those whose extinction is imminent—probably thirty in number." But we may fairly hope that the position of every one of these thirty species is not quite so bad as this. Some species are mentioned as either lost or so reduced in numbers, that it is well nigh impossible to get a sight of them even by travelling long distances, and spending many days in waiting and watching. Of two of the species enumerated, a friend, who had spent one day in Wales, wrote only the other day: "There were . . . . a good many ravens and buzzards;"† and another friend saw two kites in the principality a short time previously. To continue the list, I have only once been in the haunts of the chough, but I saw choughs. The grey lag goose, banished by drainage from the English fens, still breeds in the Hebrides and some of the northern counties of Scotland. The great skua, always very restricted in its distribution, still breeds in Unst and Foula, and is protected there. The Dartford warbler, which has certainly suffered greatly from severe winters, was never a generally diffused species; but it still breeds in most of the southern counties, and is even stated to be apparently extending its range westward and northward. Drainage has destroyed the breeding haunts of the bearded tit in most counties formerly occupied by this beautiful species, but there is no evidence to connect its disappearance from the Thames valley with direct human

* It is probably not an *abundant* bird in northern Europe.

† I have myself seen four buzzards in the air at the same moment.

agency. Undoubtedly, it wants careful watching and protection, especially from "whole clutch" egg collectors. The dotterel, save as a bird of passage (in which character its numbers seem to have revived again a little in the last few years), was always anything but a numerous species in the breeding season, and confined to the misty mountain heights, where it still rears its young.* Some Scotch landowners can still be proud of their eagles. These are all the instances given, but I reply to the author's question that the lives of these species, as British breeding birds, are in all probability worth a good many years' purchase, and I cannot allow that "it would be idle to retain them in a work on British birds, which is not intended to be out of date one or two decades hence."

We are now reduced to 200 species, but even these we are not left to enjoy in peace, because "a large proportion are never seen by those whose life is confined to land; they are pelagic, and only to be met with out at sea, or in the neighbourhood of those naked melancholy isles. . . . . ." It is quite true that to see some species which have a northern range one must go to Scotland, though there is always a chance of meeting with an example in the south; and to observe sea-birds in the breeding season, we must go to the coast, or the marshes and moors. Nor can one reasonably expect to have shy waders breeding in suburban districts in the home counties. But "pelagic" means "pertaining to the deep sea," and, surely, only a very few, and not "a large proportion," of the 200 species allotted to us are *pelagic*. With the exception of petrels and auks (which may be seen by visiting their breeding stations), all the other water birds on our list may be seen (in localities which they frequent) from the land, during the periods they spend on British shores or in British waters.

Our author deprecates the idea that he has strained a point in order to make things look a little worse than they are, and adds that they are worse than he has made them appear. The present writer is thankful that he cannot fully agree with him. Everyone must deplore the (in some degree inevitable) change which has come over our avifauna, but no good will be done by painting the picture in more gloomy colours than is necessary, and this, I think, Mr. Hudson, despite his protest, has really done. I am sure that no one would be more pleased than Mr. Hudson himself if this should prove to be the case.

The fact is that, partly from the luxuriance of our hedgerows and our gardens, and the wooded and varied nature of much of our country, many of the individual species of our wonderfully varied and interesting little avifauna require careful looking for,

* The Rev. H. A. Macpherson writes: "It would be a mistake to suppose that the dotterel has at any time bred at all numerously even in the wildest regions," the greater number visiting the Lake district on the spring passages moving on. Three pairs nested in 1891. (*Fauna of Lakeland.*)

being far less obtrusive in appearance and habits than the birds of some countries. From their local* habits also it is often necessary not only to go far afield to see some of the rarer species, but also to walk over a good deal of country—bleak, marshy meadow, woodland, heath and down, dreary salt-marsh and sea beach—in order to become acquainted with even the birds which are only not of the commonest. The dipper cannot be called an uncommon bird, yet the observer who lived all his life in the south-east quarter of Britain would probably never see it. The birds are there for those who look for them; though the observer may have to spend many years before he gains a real acquaintance with our avifauna. In point of numbers of species and individuals indeed we should have to yield to few civilised and populous countries of our own size, and although we have a cold winter climate, I think few people who are accustomed to carrying on their investigations on flat coasts, or in inland valleys, would be *much* excited with either astonishment or delight at the sight of a heron, or would not manage to turn up a few interesting species in the course of their winter walks.

Mr. Hudson seems to me inclined to throw too much blame upon "inveterate bird destroyers" and to attach too little importance to the effect of the alteration of the face of the country by drainage, cultivation, &c., and to the idiosyncrasies of certain species of birds. The drainage of fens and "broads" made a vast difference to many species. Witness what Stevenson wrote about the drainage of the fen district of Norfolk, and its birds: "The redshank was induced to return to its old haunts by the extraordinary flood of November, 1852, which burst the river bank near Southery, and laid many thousand acres under water for more than six months, making a paradise for wild fowl of all kinds, and furnishing ornithologists of this generation with a vision of times past and gone. This same flood acted in like manner upon the black tern and the black-headed gull, both of which in 1853 stayed to breed in places which had been so long abandoned by them, that their names were unknown in the land." This shows that drainage and not the direct persecution of man drove out the black tern. Among the "lost" thirteen we find Savi's warbler, or "red night reeler," and agree with the author in being disinclined to blame man (directly) for its disappearance. But drainage must have had some effect upon it. It is certain that its head quarters in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire were drained. But the half dozen speci-

* Though I have some acquaintance with the birds of about a dozen counties, I have only once been in the haunts of the woodlark; but there it seemed to be common, and I listened to two singing in oak trees—one on each side of a narrow road. The pied flycatcher in the breeding season is almost confined to Western Britain. In the one instance in which I found it established in Britain the scenery had a wonderful resemblance to that of the bird's haunts in Switzerland.

mens procured in Norfolk previously to 1856 would have hardly exterminated a race if it had been established in the "broad" district in any strength. We can only conclude that Savi's warbler either was never plentiful in Norfolk, or that some change in its range has taken place, and that at the time it was discovered by naturalists it had nearly ceased to visit England for the summer. That the range of several birds (which need not be particularised) is apparently changing now is a well-known fact among ornithologists.

It is worthy of remark that although our wild-fowlers were accustomed to snare and kill various marsh birds and wild-fowl in the breeding season year after year in certain spots, and had done so from an uncertainly remote time, yet the marsh birds seem to have been abundant down to a comparatively recent date, and to have deserted East Anglia, with the bustard, rather suddenly at about the same time. Between 1825 and 1835 the avocet, bustard, godwit, and black tern seem to have ceased breeding in Norfolk, although the last named nested in numbers as late as 1832 in Lincolnshire. About the same date the ruff ceased to be common, and the bittern left off breeding regularly in 1850. It may be that the gun finally drove them away; but the gun had been in regular use for a great many years before the dates mentioned above.

Does not this general disappearance at about the same date point to a great change coming over the face of the country about that date? And we know that this was the case. A passage from Mr. Cordeaux's writings quoted by Mr. Hudson seems to be most true: "Unless England becomes dispeopled and uncultivated, nothing can ever bring back in numbers or variety the wealth of the ancient avifauna." The wealth in marsh birds and wild-fowl of the ancient avifauna, of which Kingsley has drawn us a vivid picture when writing, with an intuition which seems almost like second sight, of the past glories of the fen country, when Crowland mere and the fens around were all undrained. "Between the dark green alders; between the pale green reeds; where the coot clanked and the bittern boomed, and the sedge-bird, not content with its own sweet song, mocked the notes of all the birds around; and then out into the broad lagoons, where hung motionless, high over head, hawk beyond hawk, buzzard beyond buzzard, kite beyond kite, as far as eye could see. Into the air as they rowed on, whirred up great skeins of wild fowl innumerable, with a cry as of all the bells of Crowland, or all the hounds of Bruneswold; while clear above all the noise sounded the wild whistle of the curlews." (*Hereward.*)

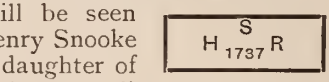
O. V. Aplin.

(*To be concluded.*)

GILBERT WHITE IN SUSSEX.

READERS of Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* are, of course, aware that several of his letters were written from Ringmer, but comparatively few know where or what manner of place Ringmer may be. Yet the white house where he was wont to stay still stands among the pines and elms rising above the village green; the monuments of his relatives are still to be seen within the ancient church; and memories of the great naturalist even now linger round the place once honoured by his visits.

For many years prior to 1780, White was in the habit of paying occasional visits to Ringmer, to his aunt, Mrs. Rebecca Snooke, widow of a former vicar of the parish. At her death in 1780, his visits seem to have ceased, and the house passed out of the possession of the Snooke family, in which, probably, it had remained for a long time, as three generations at least had lived in the village. On a slab of stone built into the wall of an outhouse of the dwelling may still be seen the initials and date standing for Henry Snooke and Rebecca, his wife, the second daughter of Gilbert White. This son-in-law of the naturalist seems to have been an ultra High Churchman and Tory, if we may judge from an entry in the church registers, for finding therein the signatures of the vicar, churchwardens and parishioners affixed to the "Protestation" of 1641, he appends as a footnote, "May the memory of such rebellious rogues perish; so wishes Henry Snooke, Ringmer." In 1759 he was publicly rebuked in church for his "indecent behaviour and supercilious scoffs at the minister in sermon time." He appears again in hardly a creditable manner in some other parochial records, for we find from the parson's tythe-books that he had for some years paid less tythe than was actually due from him. Whereupon the ancient cleric, on his discovery of this, in a marginal note writes him down a rogue: "What a rogue was Snooke to pretend he had paid enough at fourteen shillings, whereas his tythe one year with another is worth at least £3 3s." Later notes inform us that the parson managed things better: "I take Snooke's tythe now in kind, viz., two loads of hay worth at least £3 the load, besides the fruit." We must hope that White's daughter found this culprit a more estimable person at home. He died in 1763, pre-deceasing old Mrs. Snooke by seventeen years.



After this old lady's death, as aforesaid, in 1780, the house and property came into the possession of Colonel Blount, whose initials and the date 1783 may be seen on a stone slab let into a chimney stack of the house. In the family it remained until the year 1893, when it was purchased by A. De Putron, Esq. As to the village itself, White makes but little reference, except in respect of its natural history. Yet Ringmer is a place of con-

siderable antiquity, and, though not mentioned in Doomsday Book, was of sufficient size to have a fair granted to it in the thirteenth century. Lying near the northern slope of the South Down Hills, it has no doubt heard some echoes of the stirring events that have taken place in this historic county. Many are the antiquarian finds that have been made in its neighbourhood. On Glyndebourne Hill was unearthed, a few years ago, an ancient interment, attributed by authorities to Saxon times, wherein were found bronze and iron implements, earthenware vessels, the iron boss of a shield with several finger-bones attached to it by rust, and some Roman coins. These latter might, perhaps, be held to evidence an earlier sepulture. On the neighbouring hills many tumuli have been uncovered, the contents of which are mostly in the Lewes museum. In the village itself, a gold ring of mediæval origin was found some years ago, while later, some gold posy rings of the last century, together with old naval and military medals, have been discovered.

The parish church is a venerable structure, as guide-books say, standing among some fine old pollard elms, whose appearance suggests a far greater age than is presumably to be attributed to them by an entry in the registers of their planting in 1607. The edifice is mainly of the Perpendicular period, though it is supposed to have been founded in Norman times. In support of this view may be adduced the occurrence of a stone slab of Norman intersecting arcading now forming the lintel of a cottage door, within a mile of the church, from which it may have been removed at some early period. Within the church itself are some Tudor monuments, tombs of the Snooke family, and an excellent specimen of a Westmacott monument. In the vestry are volumes of a Polyglot Bible (presented to the church in the seventeenth century by Dame Barbara Springett), containing illustrations of the Temple as a huge classic structure; the ark carved with a renaissance panel, and other anachronisms. The church porch is in the main an ancient structure, but was refronted about forty years ago. Until quite recently, it was a most picturesque part of the church, but the hand of the Philistine has been upon it, and stripped away the ancient mantle of ivy which covered it. The tower is a modern erection, a very different affair from the unpretentious little bell turret, whose modest music called the parishioners to church in Gilbert White's days. Now we have in the tower a mass of metal of that usual modern assertiveness which called forth Mr. Haweis' description of English bell-ringing as "the musician's Inferno." But then, as to bells, what can be more beautiful than the sweet pastoral sound of the sheep-bells on the hills? These survivals from old times, like the teams of working oxen, which have not yet quite died out of use in this county, it is to be hoped may long remain to remind us of an age of agriculture more picturesque than this of steam ploughs and barbed wire fences.

Next to the church in age or interest is Broyle Place, now a farm-house, formerly, in pre-Reformation times, in the possession of the Archbishops of Canterbury. It dates from very early times, but presents little appearance on its outside of such antiquity. In one of the rooms, panelled to the ceiling, is some carving above the fireplace of three Normanesque arches over flat fluted columns, a style largely affected by Elizabethan craftsmen. But here, too, the Philistine has been at work, all this carving and panelling being covered over with that hideous yellow paint and grain so dear to the eye—and cheap to the pocket—of the modern Goth. In olden days this house was surrounded by a park of 1,600 acres, well-wooded, and containing a large herd of deer. At one of the boundaries of the parish, in this park, once stood an ancient tree named "Tom's oak," which, when the parson and other parochial officials beat the bounds, was marked with the sign of the Cross.

As to the natural history of Ringmer, White, in his letters, writes but briefly. He speaks of the rookery which then, as now, existed in the tall trees around Delves House where he was then staying. He describes this district as affording several kinds of birds not generally seen at Selborne; of these, however, he only particularises the crossbills, which, he says, frequented the pine groves around Delves House. These are, indeed, rare birds and worthy of special notice, with their beautiful crimson plumage and curious crossed beaks. What the other birds were which White had in mind when writing thus, we may conclude from their absence from his lists of Selborne birds. One of these is the butcher-bird or red-backed shrike, quite a common bird about Ringmer. Its victims, in the shape of bees, beetles and small birds, may be found in the hedgerows impaled on thorns; as the former are generally intact, there is reason to believe that they are placed there only as baits or attractions for the smaller birds on which the shrike preys, such as robins, chiffchaffs and other warblers. Another bird which White may have noticed here, but which is not included in his Selborne lists, is the turtle-dove, a migratory pigeon of beautiful plumage which frequents the bean and pea fields and the breadths of cornlands in flocks of ten or twenty. But there are two birds more especially associated with Gilbert White, namely, the grasshopper warbler and the chiffchaff. The former of these was first discovered by White, and though somewhat rare, its curious rattling note may be heard every spring by an attentive observer. The chiffchaff, the smallest of the warblers and the first arrival in the spring, was, if not discovered, at least first separated from its near relations, the willow and wood warblers, by White, and it is noteworthy that hereabouts its notes are the earliest heard in spring, the most continuous in summer, and prolonged the farthest into autumn around the house where Gilbert White was so often a visitor.

But these few notices of White at Ringmer would be incom-

plete without some reference to that much-travelled tortoise, Timothy, whose hibernations, manners and customs were so often the subject of the naturalist's observations. For forty years it lived in Ringmer in the possession of White's venerable relative, Mrs. Rebecca Snooke, and at her death it became the property of her nephew, who removed it with him to Selborne. Here it lived to attain to a ripe old age, eventually finding its final resting place in the Natural History Museum.

W. Heneage Legge.

Ringmer, Lewes.

IN ARCADIA.*

"Et ego in Arcadia" is the motto borne by a charming group of pansies on the cover of *Letters to Marco*—a book which ought to have been noticed sooner, but which it may be is not yet so well known but that there may be some, even among Selbornians, who have not had the delight of reading it. It is just the book for the summer, which seems at last to be coming upon us, for it breathes the spirit of out-of-doors and the air of the country; and yet, withal, it may be read with equal interest by the winter fire, when it is often delightful to recall the pleasures of the long bright days. But the author, in this series of letters, does not confine himself to summer time; and herein he is wise, for the true naturalist always finds material for observation. These are real letters, from the artist-historian of *Our River*, Mr. G. D. Leslie, to another artist, Mr. H. S. Marks. We know not whether these two painters are enrolled members of the Selborne Society, but that they are thoroughly imbued with its spirit is manifest, not only in their works—who does not know Mr. Marks's birds?—but in this charming volume.

Green Woodpecker.

Mr. Leslie wrote these letters from his house by the river at Wallingford. "D.B." letters, Mr. Marks used to call them; and though there is the difference of a century between them and Daines Barrington's correspondence with Gilbert White, the comparison is not inapt, and we are inclined to think Mr. Leslie need not be afraid of it.

The wonder is that so few people write letters of this kind. There is nothing startling recorded—nothing which any one who uses his eyes might not see in similar situations: and yet, next to the pleasure of seeing the things themselves, we know nothing pleasanter than reading such records of them. The illustrations,

* *Letters to Marco*, by G. D. Leslie, R.A. (Macmillan & Co., 12s. 6d.). *The Garden that I Love*, by Alfred Austin (Macmillan & Co., 9s.).

sometimes quaint enough, like the green woodpecker on p. 129, have life in them, and range over a great variety of subjects ; the publishers, who have kindly supplied us with two examples, have not included any of the flower drawings, which are among the best. But here are "Rosie and the Drake"—two inseparable allies during the latter's bereavement, although the introduction of another duck somewhat interrupted the strange friendship. Rosie was brought up by some ladies who "would sometimes dress her up in their hats and shawls, and even take her indoors, teaching her to drink coffee from a cup, neatly, as a human being would : an art which she has never lost." Mr. Leslie repudiates the notion that donkeys like thistles as "a gross fiction ;" at any rate, Rosie refused to touch one on any consideration.

We have spoken of the flower drawings, which are not only pretty and interesting, but instructive. This is especially the case with the three studies of the teasel, with the accompanying remarks; the figures of winter aconites, showing their mode of development, reminding us of the illustrations of Miss Agnes Fry's paper on the woodsorrel, published in these pages three years ago, and making us regret that our contributors seem so interested in birds that other objects

ROSIE AND THE DRAKE.

receive insufficient attention ; the seedpods of lilics, irises, and other plants, and others. Yes, Mr. Leslie has been in Arcadia, and we would fain stay longer in its pleasaunces, among the flowers and birds, or go with him on a visit to Kelmscott Manor, to be entertained by William Morris, and gather pink burnet roses, which are not so uncommon as he seems to think. But Mr. Alfred Austin beckons us towards "the garden that he loves," and herein too we shall find much to delight us.

Swinford Old Manor must be in every way "a desirable residence." Approached through "an old elm avenue, its grey stone frontage almost smothered in creepers up to the very top of its three rounded gables," having "the blended charm of simple harmonious form and venerable age," it is no wonder that Mr. Austin recognised in it "the haven of his hopes and the fulfilment of his most fastidious dreams." We regret that space does not allow us to reproduce the illustration—one of the many which adorn this volume—which bears out this description ; but it is the garden, rather than the house, which claims our notice.

Mr. William Robinson, whose *English Flower Garden* we noticed last year,

finds an apt pupil—or shall we rather say an active sympathiser?—in Mr. Austin: who has carried into practice many of the views put forward by the garden reformer. For the author is thoroughly practical, and the accounts of his cleanings and adaptations show that he knows what he wants and how to carry it out. His description loses nothing by being encased in a romantic frame-work, which allows the introduction of a "poet," whose verses form a pleasant feature of the book. Mr. Austin "would sacrifice flowers to birds, if he were compelled to choose between the two;" here are his lines on the thrush, "of all song birds out and away the prince."

"Hearing thee flute, who pines or grieves
For vernal smiles or showers?
Thy voice is greener than the leaves,
And fresher than the flowers.

"Scorning to wait for tuneful May,
When every throat can sing,
Thou floutest Winter with thy lay,
And art thyself the Spring."

The flowers in the garden are no rare and costly exotics; they are such as all can grow, though even now comparatively few do so. Mr. Austin sees in our wild flowers—the "undulating stretches of woodland anemones," the "covering and carpeting of wild wood celandine," "the opulent splendour of the marsh marigold"—effects beside which cultivated flowers "have a poverty-stricken look."

We regret that we can only find room for one extract from this pleasant book:—"Spring has to make way for Summer, Summer for Autumn, and Autumn for Winter; and only one of these knows how to garden, and it has to do so under rather hostile conditions. Summer is absolutely ignorant of the craft, bringing everything on with a rush, and then having to content itself with woods and copses of uniform green; and, though Winter is a great gardener in one sense, since he makes untiring, if generally unnoticed, preparations for future floral display, he has few flowers to show of his own. Autumn, I grant, knows the art of gardening to perfection, possessing the secret of careless grace even beyond the Spring. There is an orderly negligence, a well-thought-out untidiness, about autumnal forms and colours no other season can match. Even to the garden proper, the cultivated plots of man, Autumn adds such wonderful touches of happy accident, that when it comes, really comes, a wise man leaves his garden alone and allows it to fade and wane, and slowly, pathetically pass away, without any effort to hinder or conceal the decay. Indeed, it would be worth while having a cultivated garden, if only to see what Autumn does with it. What she does she seems to do unintentionally, and in those almost permanent fits of absence, during which, I suppose, she is thinking of the past. But this meditative touch of hers is more discernible in the cultivated garden than in the woodlands, and she makes the wild wood too moist and chill with her tears for it to be the fitting accessory of a cheerful home. Spring may be a less mature artist, but Spring's hopeful and sunny open-heartedness more than atones for some little lack of dexterity."

The only flaw in the book is the laxity displayed in the spelling of some of the plant names—*Ænothera*, for instance, and *Kerryia:* and "Shepherd's Bane," for "Leopard's Bane" (p. 51), is odd. But these will no doubt be put right in the next edition.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SELBORNE SOCIETY.

THE Annual Meeting and Conversazione of the Selborne Society, which was held in the Society's new rooms, at 20, Hanover Square, W., on the 30th ult., proved to be one of the most successful and enjoyable meetings yet held. About 400 members and friends were present, and the business meeting over, these found ample employment in looking at the curious and interesting exhibits lent by Mrs. Brightwen, Mr. Ashley and others, and the microscopes kindly exhibited by members of the Royal Microscopical and Queckett Societies, and in listening to the delightful music provided by Mr. Coward.

Sir John Lubbock, the President, having taken the chair, the report for the past year—copies of which were circulated in the room—was presented by the Secretary and taken as read.

The Earl of Stamford, in moving the adoption of the report, said it might be a matter of interest to the Society, in connection with what he had said last year, to know that he had happily secured the letters to Gilbert White from his most intimate friend. They covered almost the whole of his life. They were now being looked through, and if it was found practicable that they should be given to the world he should endeavour to do so as soon as possible. The letters were 220 in number, and were of extreme interest, perhaps not so much from the general point of view as on account of their simple cordial affection.

Mr. Wakefield seconded the adoption of the report in the spirit of one who believed the first duty of a critic to be to indulge in the noble exercise of praise. The report showed that the Society had done a great deal during the year. He expressed his sympathy with the proposals to set up a monumental tablet near to the grave of Gilbert White, and to give to the village of Selborne a pure water-supply. As to the increased subscriptions, he thought members got their full money's worth in the magazine NATURE NOTES. As instances of the need of such activities as theirs, he alluded to the sad extermination of kingfishers and woodpeckers at Richmond.

Mr. Wattson moved to abolish the entrance fee for membership of the Society.

This having been seconded by Mr. Western was agreed to unanimously.

Mrs. Brightwen in rising to respond to this vote was received with hearty applause. She expressed her belief that the promotion of the study of natural history would make a very great addition to the happiness of life, especially among young people; and as an instance of what might be done in National and Board Schools she mentioned, with approval, a series of pictures of birds, issued by the Christian Knowledge Society, and Miss Carrington's book, *A Narrow, Narrow World*. She found herself that she could not go into her garden without seeing something of new interest. Lately she had been engaged in training a young brown owl; and she had transported some of the caterpillars of the peacock butterfly from Leith Hill, but the scorpion fly had got at these. Wonderful little lives were being lived in every garden that none knew anything about. She was never stung by wasps of any kind because she was never unkind to them. She had lately tended a little whitethroat, and it had become the tamest little creature she ever knew; she had taught it to go hawking after flies and spiders as she directed it. It should be their aim to cultivate a knowledge of nature and to teach poor children not to destroy, and rich children not to collect so much as to observe.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK said: In the agenda paper I see that the next part of the programme is an address from the President, but I am happy to understand that you do not expect one of any length. In the first place, I beg to assure you how greatly I feel the compliment you confer upon me in electing me to the office of President of this Society. I should feel it under any circumstances a great honour, sympathising so heartily as I do in the objects of the Society, and feeling how important it is that if we are to retain the interest and beauty of animal and vegetable life we should take all possible steps to secure its preservation. I feel it all the more because I am succeeding to an office held by that great man, your first President, Lord Tennyson, who, apart from the beauty and

melody of his poetry, and his wonderful command of our mother tongue, seems to me to have had two great characteristics. The first was the deep moral feeling and the high moral lessons which his poetry contained, and the second was the manner in which he taught us to see so much in Nature that otherwise we might not have appreciated. For if you look back over the ancient writers you will be struck how little even the greatest of them appreciated the beauties of the world in which we live. I am far from suggesting that there are not some magnificent descriptions of scenery in the great poets and thinkers of old; but they are generally incidental and exceptional. If there are two men who have taught us to see what is before us, I think we should name John Ruskin and our first President.

The Protection of Wild Birds.

Our first object, as stated in the programme of the Society, is to preserve from unnecessary destruction all wild birds, animals, and plants which are harmless and beautiful. It must be with regret that we recall how many most beautiful birds have, rather recently, almost disappeared from our fauna. Amongst them I may name the common crane, the common bittern, the spoonbill, the great auk, the bustard, the night heron, and many others whose names are a delightful sound to us all, and which might well still be inhabitants of these islands. And besides these there are many occasional visitors which, if we give them the welcome that we ought to extend to all foreigners, might have been domesticated, and would have added to the beauty and interest of the country. Such were the hoopoe, the stork, the roller, the ruff, the reeve, and many others. Unfortunately, it is just those species which are noblest and most beautiful that are most liable to disappear, unless we can take steps such as this Society advocates. I have been associated with several Bills in the House of Commons which had the object of endeavouring to secure the continued existence of rare birds. With other friends, a great many years ago, I introduced a Bill with that object. In the schedule of that Bill are given the names of the birds to be protected; and I dare say many of you may have wondered how in the world that list came to be so framed; why some were included and others omitted. Well, the true history of that list is, I understand, a curious one. When we brought in that Bill Sir William Harcourt opposed it. However, we finally secured the second reading, and it was referred to a Select Committee. Sir William was a member of that Committee. He felt, no doubt, that he could not destroy the Bill after the vote of the House, hut he—very naturally from his point of view—felt bound to make it as innocuous as possihle. I am given to understand, therefore, that he thought that if he had never heard of a bird it was not important whether it was protected or not. When, on the other hand, he knew the name of a bird he objected to it. So that list is a list of the birds of England of which Sir William Harcourt had not heard at that time. That Bill had done something. But recently many of our friends have thought that the time had come when another step forward should be taken, and Sir Herbert Maxwell asked me to join him in promoting another Bill; but we find ourselves in a difficulty. Some naturalists consider that the only way to protect birds is by protecting their eggs. They say, for instance, that if we wish to protect the nightingale we cannot altogether prevent bird-nesting in the neighbourhood of London, but we may make it an offence to take the eggs. That applies, of course, to other birds. But these other naturalists said that unfortunately eggs vary so much that it would be almost impossible to obtain convictions, and, therefore, we ought to take areas, to protect certain districts. I hope we may be able to combine the ideas of both schools, which have the same object in view, by protecting both species and areas. There are some small areas where rare birds are found which may be protected, and, on the other hand, some rare species build in districts such as, for instance, the Bass Rock, where it would be impossible to forbid altogether the taking of eggs. I am not without hopes that we shall be able to carry our Bill before long.

The Destruction of the New Forest.

Then there is the other question, that of the protection of the vegetable kingdom. It is certainly a most extraordinary thing that we should have absolutely no school of forestry in this country. Many years ago, I endeavoured to persuade

Her Majesty's Government that such a school should be established. I went to the great French forestry schools, and also to Switzerland, and when I explained that I had come to see their organisations, and told them that we had nothing of the kind, it was some time ere I could get them to believe me. "You have," they said, "a larger area of forests than we, but where do the men who manage them get their education?" And it does seem the most astounding thing that we are the only country in Europe without a school of forestry. We cannot establish such schools by private enterprise because we cannot establish them without access to a forest, and that, Government alone can give. This is, therefore, a case in which instruction must be conducted by the State. It is an important economic question. Our woods are being gradually diminished. No doubt thousands of acres might be planted, especially in Scotland and Ireland, with profit and with great advantage to the scenery of the country.

In the *Transactions of the Scottish Arboricultural Society* there is an interesting paper by Mr. Lascelles, the Ranger of the New Forest, who points out that he is forbidden by law to enclose any land therein, except special areas. There being no enclosure of land no fresh planting is possible, for it need hardly be said that it is useless to plant single trees in a district of that kind without enclosure. My friend Mr. Auberon Herbert has written a good deal about the New Forest and has said that you ought to leave it to nature; but what we are really doing is to leave it to the pigs and ponies, which, as Mr. Lascelles shows, eat up the young trees as soon as they appear. If we had really left the New Forest to nature we should have left the carnivorous animals there, which would have kept down the pigs and the ponies; there would then have been a balance of nature. But we have killed off the bears and wolves and have left the young trees at the mercy of their enemies. Mr. Lascelles in his interesting paper tells us what is happening to the New Forest, the largest and most beautiful we have left. "These woods," he says, "are hastening to their end; they are being slowly destroyed by Act of Parliament." Unless something is done that will be the inevitable result. I make no attack upon the management. I find no fault with Mr. Lascelles, who, as he has shown, is powerless. The curious and interesting point of it is that the interest of the commoners, which is supposed to be protected by the present state of things, would be improved by a better system. If, for instance, we were to shut up one-third or one-fourth for twenty years, then a second third, and so on; always keeping one-third shut up, the young trees would grow and we should not only retain our beautiful woodland scenery, but it would be better for the commoners because the grass is now getting ever ranker and coarser, whereas if the trees were allowed to grow, the grass would be much richer and better: so that the commoners with only two-thirds or three-quarters of the present area, would really get more grass on it than they now do on the whole. I cannot help thinking that it is a duty we owe to those who preceded us and to those who come after us alike to take some such remedial steps. M. Boppe, the great French authority on forestry, who visited the New Forest some years ago, wrote a Report on it, in which he declared that 49,000 acres of woodland there would in fifty years be nothing but a barren waste. This matter seriously demands the attention of the Government. It is a sad and cruel thing that such a possession should be gradually allowed to drift into inevitable ruin.

Epping Forest.

Another forest nearer to you is Epping Forest, which has been preserved by the energy and expenditure of the Corporation of the City of London. Many of you may have seen not long ago an energetic correspondence in the papers referring to what has been done there and to the thinnings which have been made. I went down there a fortnight ago and we went over the ground with the verderers and others who are interested, and I am bound to say, after looking carefully over it, that, in our judgment, the thinning has been judiciously done, that only comparatively poor trees have been removed to give greater head-room for the finer specimens, and that in fact many more will eventually have to be cut down. But this will be no loss, for one good tree is worth half a dozen bad ones. We are all indebted to the verderers of the forest for their care and attention, and fifty years hence, if the present arrangement continues, it will be in a finer and more beautiful condition than at present.

The Worst Vandals.

Mrs. Brightwen has alluded to the fact that many children show their love for birds by throwing stones at them and their love of flowers by gathering and then throwing them away. It is a sad sight on any bank holiday to see the remains of flowers carelessly gathered and then thrown away. But there is something even worse than gathering flowers, and that is grubbing up the roots. Our most beautiful flowers, even the common ones, are being diminished by grubbing up the roots and carrying them away. That is very sad; and certainly this Society will be doing a very good work if it can succeed in educating the children and in stopping those who eradicate the rare and beautiful species; for it is against them we must be on our guard. There is no reason in the nature of things why the mere growth of population should lead to the destruction of our birds and flowers.

If we could only instil into the minds of children, both young and grown up, the principles to which Mrs. Brightwen has eloquently alluded, we might hope to arrest the gradual destruction of the rarer birds and the loveliest flowers, and enjoy all the pleasure which might be derived from the richness and variety of the fauna and flora of our country.

Sir W. H. Flower congratulated the Society upon the success of that meeting. He had passed earlier in the day by that protected nook between the Serpentine and Rotten Row, where so many birds and animals have found a pleasant resting place. Such a spot was something to be thankful for; but the many passed it by unnoticed. He congratulated the Society on their choice of a president. There was no man in the country who did so much in so many different ways as Sir John Lubbock. He was rather afraid of some of the Acts brought into the House of Commons in regard to some of the Society's particular subjects. It was better to trust to the efforts of the Selborne and kindred bodies to disseminate a knowledge and love of nature, and so to create a sentiment in favour of the protection and preservation of all that should be protected and preserved, than to create new crimes out of the actions of those who violated the principles of the Selborne Society. At any rate where that was to be done it should be done with the greatest possible care, lest harm should follow rather than good. Professor Flower concluded by moving that the thanks of the meeting be accorded to their President, who had so often before shown his unique capacities in the popularisation of science.

Dr. Dudley Buxton, in seconding the vote of thanks, dwelt upon the peculiar fitness for the office of President of the Selborne Society which Sir John Lubbock's valuable researches in the domain of Natural History gave him. The work of the Society was necessarily progressive, and must be largely of the nature of a propaganda, and with such a President it was reasonable to expect greater success in the future, and more keen forward movement. The success of that night's meeting was an emphatic justification of an innovation first made last year, when the Annual General Meeting of the Society was changed from a mere formal gathering together of a few officers in a dark room in a street off the Strand to a cheerful and brilliant conversazione held in Suffolk Street. Then came the removal of the Society to its present premises, an earnest of more vitality, more forward movement in the future. Enjoyable as were such large meetings they had yet a further use. At such times the Branches could meet and arrange mutual plans for work. In all this renewed vigour they needed a head, and probably no one in that room would doubt that no better head could have been found than Sir John Lubbock, who in honouring the Society, honoured himself in forwarding so good a work. Before he sat down, he would like to say a word about the remark Mr. Wakefield had made, that the Selborne village was to have a pure supply of water in the far future; as a matter of fact, he was glad to say that far future was a very near future, as the works were complete, and would on June 1st be supplying Gilbert White's village with pure water.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

An Introduction to Structural Botany (Flowering Plants), by D. H. Scott (A. & C. Black, London, 1894, pp. 288, 113 figures). *Practical Botany for Beginners*, by F. O. Bower (Macmillan & Co., London, 1894, pp. 275, 13 figures). Love of nature is mere idle affectation with a large class of people, who deceive themselves and no one else. They ought to take up art or music, where the pretence is less likely to be detected, and avoid setting a pernicious example of insincerity to a sincere folk. If examinations were not entirely hateful things, I should like to see a knowledge of Prof. Oliver's *Lessons*, and of the two books cited above, made indispensable qualifications for entrance of plant-lovers to the Selborne Society. They contain the solid rock of knowledge on which a lasting attachment to the plant world must be founded. So many are content with the reading of specious and fraudulent attempts to teach by mixing an ounce of fact with an intolerable deal of speculation—books that are the "penny dreadfuls" and "shilling shockers" of Natural History—that a more than ordinarily warm welcome must be given to the genuine article when it appears. These two books do for the study of the minute structure of plants the same kind of service that Prof. Oliver's *Lessons* have rendered to the study of the external characters. They are clearly written in plain language, and consist of first-hand knowledge expressly arranged for this definite end. Such books are the grammar of botany, and differ from other grammars we know of in their complete lack of pedantry. G. M.

A Monograph of the Stalactites and Stalagmites of the Cleave's Cave, near Dalry, Ayrshire, by John Smith (London: Elliot Stock, pp. 34, 36 plates). In the course of his archæological explorations of this cave Mr. Smith made many notes and drawings of the calcareous incrustations he met with, and he publishes them in this volume in a somewhat extravagant fashion. He has some acute observations that the geological student will be glad to have recorded. But there are other remarks that require further consideration on the part of the author, as for instance, that the supply of the carbonic acid to the water that dissolves out the lime in its passage to the roof of the cave is obtained mainly from the decomposition of the vegetable covering of the soil; that the quantity of the acid thus supplied depends on whether herbivorous animals are feeding on the surface, and worms and moles are burrowing below it; that a section of a stalagmite read properly gives a history of the climatology—the winds, the rains, the temperature, the moist and dry weather of the cave district—for hundreds, perhaps for thousands, of years. The author reaches a poetic height when in laying down his pen at the close of his short essay, he tells us that in the cave "the deposition of calcite is going on, enclosing in its grasp mosses, lichens, and Marchantia, which, whilst they are 'fresh and flourishing,' may be said to be standing with their feet in these marble tombs." W. C.

We hope the authors of *The Country Month by Month* are not becoming careless, but there are signs of this in the June volume. We have repetitions—"the grasses themselves are in full flower" (p. 8), and "even the grasses are in full flower" (p. 11); "the corn crowfoot may be traced to the Moorish occupation of Spain" (p. 14), and "it has been suggested that it is to the Moors in Spain that we are indebted for the probably accidental introduction of this plant" (p. 17). Dr. Forster's spurious antique is quoted as an "old rhyme," and Professor Buckman's song of "The Kerlock Plant" is cited as an "old west country rhyme." *Anthriscus sylvestris* is styled "Mayweed," a name which it very seldom, if ever, bears, and which is likely to mislead; and what is meant by saying that the evening campion has "little or no perfume"? Professor Boulger and the lady who chooses to be known as "J. A. Owen" must not fall short of the high standard which they have set up in the earlier volumes of this delightful series.

We have received the first instalment of Mr. W. F. Kirby's *European Butterflies and Moths*, which Messrs. Cassell & Co. are re-issuing in sixpenny monthly parts. The coloured plates lend an additional attraction to a work which cannot fail to be useful to many of our readers.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

The Alpine Swift.—Some of your readers will perhaps be kind enough to let me know whether they have this year seen the Alpine swift (*Cypselus Melba*) in England. It is distinguishable from the common swift by its greater size, its wings being broader and longer, its colour, which is a light mouse-brown, and also by its extraordinary swiftness of flight. Howard Saunders, in his *British Birds*, says it is a rare visitor to our country, and is not generally found far north of the Alps; last year, however, I saw two in East Yorkshire, and wrote announcing the same in the *Standard*, and asking if anybody who had seen it elsewhere would kindly let me know. I heard from two gentlemen, one in Brighton, the other in Kent, who said they thought they must have seen the bird as described, having noticed a swift of unusual size and light brown colour, but did not know the name. A few days back I saw two at a small village, Godesberg, about a mile from Bonn, and yesterday I saw another here in Bonn when walking by the Rhine. This leads me to think that these birds must come further north than is generally supposed. White speaks of the same, I believe, as the great white-bellied swift of Gibraltar (*Hirundo Melba*).

Bonn. M. Laws.

Cockchafers (*N.N.*, 1893, pp. 39, 57, 96).—This year cockchafers have been fairly abundant here. I first noticed them on June 3, but probably that was not their earliest appearance.

Malvern Link, Worcestershire. Richard F. Towndrow.

Nightingales (p. 105).—Mr. W. J. C. Miller refers with some surprise to the absence of the nightingale in his native place, "a seaside and woodland district of Devonshire." In a similar district in South Wales, with which I was familiar during several years of my boyhood, and which was also a "paradise of feathered songsters," this bird has never, to my knowledge, been seen or heard excepting on an occasion many years ago, when about twenty or thirty nightingales were introduced, as I have been informed, by a gentleman resident in the neighbourhood, which left the district soon after their arrival and never returned. I can say the same with regard to every other sea-side place where I happen to have been during the all too short sojourn of this charming warbler in this country. I should be very glad to hear the experiences of others as to the absence of nightingales in seaside districts, and any causes that may be assigned for it.

Hampstead. J. M. Voss.

Flies Hybernating.—In December last I cut the head off a very big ivy stump. It was *crammed* with sparrows' and starlings' nests, but the curious thing was a vast congregation of minute flies (not midges, but scarcely bigger). They lay like dust on the ground. I took them up in handfuls, I swept them up, I shovelled them up, and when put into a wheelbarrow they covered the bottom to the depth of quite a quarter of an inch. They were all alive and moved, though drowsily, about; there must have been half a bushel.

Nascott House, Watford. George Rooper.

Summer Migrants.—The following are the dates on which I first had the pleasure of seeing or hearing some of the above this year here in East Suffolk:—Chiffchaff, March 27; wryneck, April 10; cuckoo, April 14; nightingale, April 21; flycatcher, May 13. The redstart was here in the second week of April. The first winter aconites were in bloom in our garden on Christmas Eve; the first snowdrop, January 20; first crocus, January 30. Daphne Mezereum (white var.) began to bloom on February 3: lesser celandine, February 27. The chaffinch began to sing on February 26.

Walpole Vicarage, Halesworth. W. R. Tate.

The order of arrival of the summer songsters is as follows at Melbourne, Derbyshire:—Sand martin, April 2; chiffchaff, April 4; blackcap, April 10; redstart, April 11; cuckoo, April 15: swallow, April 19; nightingale, May 10.

Clift Cottage, Melbourne, Derby. Arthur Myers.

Wood-Pigeons in the City.—Early in the spring of the present year a pair of wood-pigeons built a nest in an elm tree in the churchyard—now laid out as a public garden—of St. Botolph, Aldersgate Street, in the very heart and busiest part of the City of London, within a stone's throw of the General Post Office—an extraordinary occurrence, the like of which, it is understood, has never before been known. Two eggs were duly hatched, and the young birds thrived for a while, but came to an untimely and most unfortunate end. One was found drowned early one morning in the basin of an ornamental fountain near the entrance, by the night policeman, whose beat extends through the churchyard; and the other was picked up a day or two afterwards by the garden-keeper at the foot of the elm tree, with one wing nearly torn off, and had to be destroyed. The parent birds, not discouraged by this disaster, are now (June 13) sitting again with a second brood. Unluckily the tree with the nest—which is about thirty-five feet from the ground—stands in an awkward angle close up to and overhung by some lofty buildings recently erected for the Post Office authorities; consequently, as the churchyard is narrow, there is a risk of further misfortunes when the young birds leave their nest and first attempt to fly. The garden-keeper, who takes great interest in the matter, fears that even if this difficulty is overcome, inasmuch as it will probably take place at an early hour, when there are no people about and the place is quiet, the fledglings will fall a prey to the cats, which at that time are generally prowling about, but it is to be hoped that these forebodings may not be realised.

114, *Albion Road, Stoke Newington, N.* HARRY CHIPERFIELD.

Is Helix pomatia native to Great Britain?—In the March issue of that delightfully Selbornian work, *The Country Month by Month*, is a reference (p. 41) to the introduction of *Helix pomatia* into this country by the Romans, as if it were an admitted fact. I should like to know if the question has been thoroughly considered and finally settled by our conchological authorities. Mr. Lovell Reeve, in his *British Mollusks* (p. 61), speaks doubtfully:—"*It is said* to have been introduced into England about the middle of the 16th century, either as a foreign delicacy, or as a cure for consumption. The species, *if not indigenous*, has become fully naturalized in our southern counties, but it is not generally common. Few Englishmen venture to partake of *Helix pomatia*, though Ben Jonson and Lister have extolled it as a dainty dish." A few lines further on he says, "Specimens had been transported from Italy some thirty years before by an English nobleman, for the same purpose" (the cure of consumption) "to the neighbourhood of Reigate and Box Hill . . . . and . . . . they had bred abundantly." This is distinctly non-committal on the general question, though the introduction at Box Hill and Reigate seems accepted. From the data given, that introduction must have taken place about 1820. The name of the "English nobleman" is not given. The tradition of the Roman introduction is not referred to. Mr. Gwyn Jeffreys is emphatically in favour of nativity. He states (*Brit. Conch.*, vol. i., p. 177)—"There was at one time a popular notion that it had been introduced into this country by the Romans, because it is found near several ancient encampments; but there does not appear to be any other foundation for this idea. The *Helix pomatia* has not been found at Wroxeter or York, nor in many other parts of England and Wales, where the Romans built cities or had important military stations; *and in all probability this kind of snail was not known to them*, as another species (*Helix lucorum*) takes its place in central Italy. There is no better reason for the rumour which is mentioned by Montagu, that it was imported from Italy about the middle of the 16th century, either as an article of food or for medicinal purposes, and turned out in Surrey by a Mr. Howard, at Albury. It was well known to Lister, who wrote in 1678, as the largest of our native snails; and in all probability it is equally indigenous with *Helix aspersa*." My own opinion strongly inclines to the view that this fine snail is native to England. It is true I first saw it at Handborough, near Oxford, on the site of a Roman villa; but its introduction there, though probable (it may have been brought from the southern counties, not from abroad), is not necessarily certain; the region is near to the oolitic limestone, which at times bears an almost chalky character. No record of the species—away from the Roman site—is, however, known for the district so far as I am aware.

At no other Roman station have I met with *Helix pomatia*, Richborough, Pevensey, Lymne, or elsewhere. Shells from among the deep-buried pottery fragments at Uriconium were obtained for me, but all proved to be *aspersa* and *nemoralis*. I have *pomatia*, collected by myself, from the chalk hills of Bedfordshire (near Luton), from Brasted in Kent, and from Epsom, Box Hill, and Caterham in Surrey. Save at Box Hill—where certainly a Roman road once passed not very far from the spot where I find the snail now—I am not aware of any connection of the localities with Roman remains or occupation. Mr. Thomas Wright, in *The Celt, Roman, and Saxon*, p. 344, mentions as a curious circumstance that a large species of snail is often found about Roman stations, but he gives no instances. He also says that in excavating Roman sites, large quantities of shells are often met with, but the species are not named, and he admits that they may be self-buried and not belonging to the Roman period at all.

WILLIAM WHITWELL.

Cunning Thrushes.—A person whose cottage window overlooks my garden, told me that one Sunday she saw two thrushes slip over the wall and disappear among the currant-bushes. Nearer the house are the raspberry canes in full sight. The birds reappeared presently on the path, looking round as if unconcerned. However, they made their way cautiously to the raspberries, and flew among them, pecking away with might and main. The woman had only to tap at the window to make the speckled thieves fly away.

Alston. I. E. PAGE.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mrs. C.—Mr. W. F. Kirby says:—"The dragonfly described is probably *Agrion* (or *Calopteryx*) *Virgo*, Linn. There is a small 'Illustrated Handbook of British Dragonflies,' published by E. W. Allen, and a synopsis of British Dragonflies, by Dr. Hagen in the Entomologists' Annual for 1857."

C. F.—(1) *Mnium undulatum* Hedw.; (2) Mostly *Atrichum undulatum*, P. Beauv. partly *Eurhynchium prælongum* Schimp; (3) *Plagiothecium undulatum*, Br. and Sch. mixed with *Dicranum scoparium* Hedw.

R. C.—Mr. W. F. Kirby names the wild bees thus:—(1) *Andrena fulva;* (2) *A nigro-aenea:* (3 and 4) *A trimmerana;* (5) *Prosopis hyalinata;* (6) *Halictus Smeathmanellus;* but says:—"The specimens are not in sufficiently good condition for the determinations to be given as more than approximately correct."

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

The space occupied by the account of the Selborne Society's Annual Meeting, renders it more difficult than ever to find room for the abundant material at our disposal. We can only regret that our space is so limited.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Leaflet Fund.—This Fund has been started to print leaflets for gratuitous distribution, dealing with any of the Society's objects. All amounts thus received will be acknowledged on this page, and any suggestions as to suitable leaflets will be gladly received by the Committee. A donation of £1 has already been received from the Bath Branch for this purpose.

Selborne Library.—The Council gratefully acknowledge the following works, presented by F. A. Hort, Esq., Hon. Sec. Cambridge Branch:—

Home Life on an Ostrich Farm, by A. Martin.

British Marine Testaceous Mollusca, by William Clark.

Animal Physiology, by Vincent T. Murché (Blackie's Elementary Text Book).

English Plant Names, by John Earle, M.A.

The Selborne Water Supply.—The scheme set on foot last year to bring a supply of water from the Well-head to the doors of the people of Selborne has now been successfully completed, and the opening ceremony was performed on Friday, June 8, by Lady Sophia Palmer. After an address by the Earl of Selborne, those present were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Read at "The Wakes."

Field Club Meetings.—Members who wish to join the Club, can do so on payment of one shilling. All particulars may be obtained of the Hon. Sec., Central Field Club, 20, Hanover Square, W.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR JULY.

July 7.—Merstham to Caterham. Meet at Merstham station at 4.15 p.m. Trains leave as follows:—Charing Cross 2.5, 3.20; Cannon Street 2.17, 3.5, 3.30; London Bridge 2.20, 3.8, 3.33. Professor Boulger has kindly consented to conduct the ramble and deliver a Lecturette on the "Flora of the Chalk Downs." Tea at Railway Hotel, Caterham, about 6.15.

July 14.—Wimbledon Common and Coombe Wood. Meet at Putney station, S.W.R., 2.51.

July 21.—Chingford, through Sewardstone to High Beech. Meet at Chingford station 3.8. Train leaves Liverpool Street 2.32, Clapton 2.48.

July 28.—Esher Common, &c. Waterloo station 2.27, Richmond (old station) 1.51, Surbiton 2.50. Papers will be read.

Council and Committee Meetings.—The next Meetings of the Council will be held on July 4 and August 1, at 5.30 p.m. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee meet on July 18, at 5.30 p.m.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Bath.—The Members of this Branch paid a visit to the Royal Victoria Park on May 19. The party was conducted by Mr. J. H. Morris (who laid out the gardens), the Superintendent, Mr. Milburn, and the Chairman of the Park Committee, Mr. J. S. Bartrum. Tea was partaken of at the Park Farm, and at its conclusion Mr. Bartrum gave a short history of the Park.

City of London.—A Branch is about to be formed for the City of London, having its headquarters at the St. Nicholas Club, 81, Queen Victoria Street, Hon. Sec., Mr. Geo. Chambers.

North Kent.—It is hoped that a Branch will be revived in this district. Members and others wishing to join or desiring further particulars, are requested to communicate with Mrs. R. Holt White, Gravel Hill, Bexley Heath.

Southampton.—By invitation of the Hampshire Field Club, the Members of this Branch were present at an afternoon excursion to Milford-on-Sea, on June 6. The party were met at the church by the Vicar, the Rev. R. M. Wilkinson, who read a paper on its history. Mr. Whitaker, in the course of some remarks, warned any person writing on local Floras not to state exact localities, lest that very objectionable person, the indiscriminate collector, should exterminate all the rare plants. Mr. Whitaker's observations will be readily endorsed by all Selbornians.

Members who can undertake Secretaryships of the following branches are requested to communicate with the Secretary, Selborne Society, 20, Hanover Square, London, W.:—Bolton-le-Moors, Dublin, Forth, Guildford, Liverpool and Weybridge.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 56. AUGUST, 1894. Vol. V.

LONDON TREES AND GARDENS.

By the Editor.

THE foreigner who comes to London, and who has formed his own ideas as to the city of smoke, is surprised to find how many trees grow within its boundaries. Even within "the City" itself there is a surprising number of healthy trees, a list of which was published some time since in a London paper. Much, too, has been done in other ways to improve London during the last few years; and St. Paul's Churchyard now vies in attractiveness with the gardens surrounding many churches in Paris. Other attempts to beautify London are equally successful, notably the rows of planes which grace the Embankment between Blackfriars and Westminster; and numerous churchyards have been converted into gardens by the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, the eleventh Report of which (for 1893), is before us. It is with no desire to ignore or to minimise the various efforts that have been made that we propose to draw attention to the urgent need of further development in this direction.

Beginning with our streets, it can scarcely be said that their present condition is satisfactory. Shaftesbury Avenue on the north side of the river, and various roads—Blackfriars Road, St. George's Road, and London Road—on the south, may be taken as illustrations. The three roads last named are under the control of the St. George's Vestry, and afford an admirable example of the way in which bodies of this kind neglect their trust.

Any one of the three roads just mentioned affords a series of object lessons. Every form of wrong-doing is conspicuously manifest. A large number of the trees are dead, others are in

various stages of disease—putting out a yearly diminishing number of leaves, indeed, but utterly incapable of vigorous growth. Many have broken loose from their fastenings, have been tossed about by every wind for days and even weeks, no one attending to them, and have beaten themselves to death against the iron railings which are supposed to protect them. Others have been so tightly bound to their stakes that the circulation of the sap has been prevented; hence the hideous gnarled, distorted wrecks which are to be met with on every side. Some have been broken off, and present the ludicrous appearance of broomsticks carefully protected by tree-guards. Of the trees that grow and thrive, in spite of neglect, a large number are of various kinds—poplars, birches, and the like—although the contract with the Vestry specifies the plane as the only tree to be planted.

The blame for this state of things rests entirely with the Vestry. Some few years since an attempt was made to bring about a better state of things. One of our best authorities on tree-growth was consulted unofficially, and submitted an exhaustive report, showing exactly what was needed; a "tree committee" was appointed—and there the matter stopped. Certain reactionaries on the Vestry opposed all attempts at improvement, and the result is the disgraceful state of affairs which prevails at the present moment. Any one who will take the trouble to walk down either of the roads mentioned will see that we have understated the case; and the condition of the trees may be compared with the by no means perfect but very superior condition of those under the management of the adjoining Vestry of Newington. Attention has been called to the matter more than once in the gardening press and elsewhere, but the St. George's Vestry shows no sign of moving, and its trees remain a standing disgrace to that body.

So much for our roads; let us turn to other examples of how not to do it. A disgraceful instance of disfigurement is that of the churchyard of St. Mary-le-Strand. Until last year the avenue of planes leading up to Wren's beautiful building was one of the most charming objects in London, its position at the end of the great thoroughfare rendering it singularly effective. On the occasion of the royal wedding last year, the churchyard was occupied with tiers of seats, and the beautiful trees were "butchered to make a *London* holiday." We saw them after the seats were removed—a sight to move to tears! Look at them now—a permanent disfigurement to the Strand, for they will never regain their beauty of form—and estimate, if you can, at their true value, the gain to the individuals who let the seats, and the loss to the community.

The Report of the Metropolitan Gardens Association, to which we have already referred, shows a good record of work for its eleven years' existence. Nearly three hundred items of work are recorded as having been executed, and fifty more are under

consideration or awaiting execution. Sixty-seven recreation-grounds, many of them disused churchyards, have been laid out, an extent of 89 acres, at a cost of nearly £29,000—and a large number of other open spaces have been secured and maintained. Tree-planting has been undertaken on a large scale, and seats have been placed in a number of places. School playgrounds have been opened on Saturdays; grants have been made to gymnasia; and the Kyrle Society and similar bodies have received gifts of money from the Association. The Report costs only 6d., and besides a description of the work undertaken and in hand, with interesting details, contains a list of the 449 burial grounds existing within the Metropolitan area, the principal "Open Space" Acts of Parliament; and a list of trees and shrubs suitable for planting in London and the suburbs. London Selbornians will do well to send to 83, Lancaster Gate, W., for this Report, and to support the Association by their subscriptions.

We venture, however, to suggest to the Association the desirability of keeping in order the work already undertaken, and for this purpose it should be visited at least annually by some official. At present, even in places where its operations are especially needed, little or no supervision seems to be exercised. Some years ago, three plane trees were planted by the Association on the Triangle, locally known as "Flat-iron Square," in Union Street, S.E. One of these is still flourishing; two are dead (one has been so for years, the other has long been moribund and succumbed last year), and these are a receptacle for rags and rubbish of various kinds. There are few neighbourhoods where the brightness which trees bring is more needed than in this gloomy corner of the Borough; yet no attempt has been made to establish fresh trees. The south side of the river, it is evident from the Association's excellent map, hardly receives its fair share of attention, and it is thus the more important that what is done should be duly attended to.

We do not know how far an improvement of the various spaces which lie off such thoroughfares as the Kennington Road come within the scope of work undertaken by the Association, but there is ample room for it. Walcot Square, for instance, is at present almost treeless, and the proprietor would probably not object to plant trees if they were given him, even if he did not choose to do so at his own expense. A much larger space, in which a ten years' residence gives us a personal interest, is West Square, off the St. George's Road. Here no attempt is made to plant fresh trees, and the old ones are steadily dying; the grass is not renewed; no flowering shrubs are planted; the only attempt at beautifying this large space is the planting annually in a central bed a certain number of geraniums; and as the inhabitants have no access to the square, a distant view is all that can be obtained of these. There are 55 houses in this square, and each pays 13s. annually for keeping it up, making

a sum of £35 15s. Nothing, however, is done; letters of remonstrance are unanswered. Can Lord Meath's Association do anything to improve this state of things?

There are those who find a ready solution, at any rate in theory, for such difficulties by a vague reference to the London County Council. The Council, however, has plenty to do in looking after the grounds at present under its care. Nothing can be much worse than the condition of the long borders surrounding the gardens on the Embankment between Charing Cross and Westminster. Weeds flourish here almost unchecked (as indeed they do in the very centre of some of the beds); the annuals planted are of the commonest and poorest kinds; the perennials are badly selected and insufficient in quantity; and the general effect is poor. It may be that reasons of economy will be alleged for this shabbiness, but a better choice of annuals would not cost more than the present sorry selection, and hardy perennials are cheap enough. The Council can do better things—witness the herbaceous borders in Kennington Park—and the matter should receive attention. Selbornians in London can do no better work than by urging on their representatives on vestries and local authorites to pay attention to matters of this kind.

A DEVONIAN HEADLAND.

DEEP within the great West Bay of Dorset and Devon lies a headland to which sea-birds have always flocked as to a chosen retreat. The upland down ends in lofty cliffs that run sheer to the water's edge; and close by, both east and west, clear brooks, which spring from the underlying greensand, have worn out charming little valleys that bear the local name of *combes*, such as we find, for instance, in Salcombe and Babbicombe.

The headland itself bears a Norse name, derived from the hamlet that lies in the eastern valley—it was a little way off, on the shores of the same great bay, that the Norsemen had their first *historic* conflict with the English—but the hamlet might well bear a similar place-name with its western neighbour, and be called, more appropriately, Chalcombe.

The headland used to be, in the breeding season, alive with sea-birds. Prominent among them was the graceful form of the herring-gull, and the snake-like neck of the cormorant and its cousin, the shag. More numerous than these was the scarcely less graceful-winged common gull, and the kind called, from its utterance, like the cuckoo and the turtle-dove, the kittiwake; while the sea below was often dotted over with guillemots and razor-bills, known by the fishermen under the local name of

mers, a name wherein they preserve, no doubt unknowingly, the excellent title of mergus, or diver.

Chalcombe Head was almost entirely appropriated by sea-birds. The cliffs are here lofty, hard, and everywhere well nigh perpendicular: they were thus entirely unclimbable, save only at one perilous gap near the hamlet, where adventurous smugglers, by a terrible path which we may well look down with awe, used to carry up the brandy-kegs, or, as they were called, *tubs*—with which, in their open lug-sail boats, with picturesque bark-browned sails, they ran across the Channel, often in dark and boisterous weather, from the French coast at Cherbourg.

The birds could here breed unmolested. About half-way down the cliffs, kindly Nature seemed to have especially provided for them a fit and secure nesting-place. For there, one of the layers of flints, which run regularly along the upper chalk, had fallen out, and thus left a long and deep horizontal ledge, which was full of birds' nests, from one end to the other. When the young birds were hatched, an observer who could look without dizziness over the edge, straight down the high cliffs, might see the necks of the young protruding beyond the ledge over the rocks and sea below. And then, sometimes, adventurous boys would tie a tin kettle to one end of a long rope, and rattling the kettle against the cliff all along the ledge, would thus, at the utmost risk of breaking their necks, send the nestlings flying off into space, and raise such an amazing clamour among the alarmed parents as would add much to the delightful excitement of the perilous pleasure. High over head the angry gulls would fly, each one of the frightened flock striving, as it would seem, to make more noise than its companions. Now and then one after another of the anxious mothers would make a swoop down, right at the head of the disturbing boy, as if she was going to try to knock the intruder over the edge of the cliff. And a downrush of the wonderful flight of the big white herring-gulls, as one lay near their stronghold at the edge of the cliffs, might certainly seem alarming. After many attempts with a tin kettle, the birds got to regard them much as land-birds do a passing railway train:—they became, as it were, kettle-hardened. Then ingenious youth would try the letting down of a lighted furze-branch, which, though more perilous and difficult to do properly, would sometimes prove for awhile more effective. But birds soon get used to threats that do them no harm; thus these yearly encounters between the boys and the sea-birds seemed to end at last like lovers' quarrels, and proved little beyond the renewing of love. For there were then no rifles, no guns indeed of any kind, to strew the cliffs and shores with death. The railway was then far off, and, from their sport amidst these birds, the boys learnt lessons in bird-life, and went therefrom to other lore in natural history, such as no books in their after lives could teach them, and no exile from these pleasant regions could ever deprive them of. More than one young Selbornian has, amidst

scenes like these, acquired tastes and laid up knowledge, through which he has been enabled to find delight in the most unpoetic duties that he might afterwards have had to perform.

On the eastern side of Chalcombe Cove there stands a noble cliff, the very *beau ideal* of the famous English white cliffs, which was examined and reported on by Sir Henry de la Bèche, in the early years of the Geologic Survey, and of which a fine picture, taken mainly from the geologic point of view, hangs in the Jermyn Street Museum of Geology. This cliff was a little less difficult to climb, either up or down, than the headland; and, on its extreme eastern slope, what the geologists call a fault had uplifted some of the softer marls that elsewhere lay among the Jurassic strata lower down; thus inquisitive boys were able to study the abodes of the denizens of these cliffs by closer methods than those of the rope and tin kettle. At the Head, the lower greensand, which the waves had hardened into compact rock, rests immediately on a layer of lias, from which, for ages, the fishermen had derived excellent ballast-stones for the boats that were used for fishing and, of old, for smuggling.

The denizens of this cliff were mainly jackdaws, kestrels, ravens, and rock-pigeons, though now and then the nest of a gull or some other sea-bird might be found among them. Many an arduous climb had at last been rewarded by the sight of a gull's nest, a jackdaw's, a raven's, or a pigeon's, and then the difficulty would be how to get up or down again. More than once a boy has tumbled down from some great height, but, fortunately, his light weight fell harmless on soft earth, or marl, or rubble that had accumulated at the base of the cliff.

The cliffs on both sides dip, lovingly as it were, towards the little cove, as if they would embrace it from the world in a basin of its own; and along their bases, or on the little contained beach, strange objects have been often picked up, mixed with cuttle-fish and driftwood, after stormy weather. Large numbers of mers—that is to say, of razorbills, guillemots, and the like—mixed, now and then, with a rare puffin, or smew, or merganser, have been found, cast dead upon the shore; and one might often have wondered why diving birds like these, which swim like fish, should have met with such a fate. The fishermen's view was that, owing to the long continued dirty state of the weather and the water, the mers had been unable to capture their prey; and as they lived entirely on fish, they had become so weak that they had been actually *drowned*, and so cast ashore. A stormy petrel, or Mother Carey's chicken, has been picked up inland, and as it had been observed in storms, disporting itself in erratic course among the breakers, while others have been noticed elsewhere along the coast, it has been supposed that, in such a likely region, a breeding-place existed somewhere, though no nest had been found.

Besides the petrel many another uncommon bird has been observed at times about the headland. On the down above it an

osprey or fish-hawk, and a hooded crow, have been seen; on the rocks or the sea below, a goosander, an eider-duck, a great northern diver, and a solan goose or gannet; while shearwaters have been often seen off the Head a little way out at sea, and the commoner shore birds might have been noticed about here at almost any time.

The red-legged and red-beaked chough has been rarely seen here, and of late years not at all. Since the rifle period it has, in fact, become scarce everywhere, having been shot for private collections or museums. Very interesting was the sight—which used to be a nowise uncommon one upon the Head—to witness the mobbing, by a mingled flock of rooks and jackdaws, of an ancient pair of ravens, which had built for ages in the neighbouring cliff. The smaller and more agile birds would swoop down again and again upon the ravens, often missing their aim, but, by numbers, tiring out the ravens, who were unable to retaliate; till at length, the din of notes in croaks of varying pitch—raven, rook, jackdaw—would, by degrees, die away in the distance, and the ravens would at last find shelter from their tormentors in some wood, or cleft, or cave. According to popular belief, the raven lives to the age of a hundred years or more, and a story is told of a farmer from Somerset—where, it used to be added, the wits are sometimes dull—who once got a pair to keep, in order to ascertain whether the legend was true! The legend seems to have been accepted by the poets, for a famous jilted lover tells the world the oft-repeated tale that (*crow* being the accepted generic name for any black bird of the rook type) he should forget the dear one

> "Never, though his mortal summers to such length of years should come,
> As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery home!"

The little combes that lie east and west of the Head are delightful abodes for land-birds, as, indeed, they are for many other kinds of residents or visitors. Since the railway penetrated into the region, a lady novelist spent her summer holidays in a cottage in one of the combes. She laid in the combe the chief scenes in one of her novels, written on the spot; and in it she describes scenery, characters, and incidents clearly recognisable to those who know the district well, her only error being that when she wished to introduce a little local dialect she put into the mouths of the peasantry, who spoke the soft, poetic language that had descended to them from the Wessex English of King Alfred's days, the broad northern dialect of the Brontë region of Yorkshire. The birds delighted her, as well they might, though she did not stay long enough to see the whole bird-life of the year; and, alas! the days of guns and rifles and general massacre had arrived, and had destroyed much of its poetic charm before she came to describe it in her novel. The Philistine period of death and destruction had set in, and the poetry of the birds had, it might be feared, well-nigh gone for ever.

How delightful it was in the old-world days to which these notes refer, to watch the graceful wheatears, in pleasant family parties, dotted about over the downs; to observe the motions and catch the pleasant chirpings of the stonechats and the whinchats among the furze bushes; to catch the swift and dazzling flight of the kingfisher, and find its nest by the river-bank; to note the stately heron, patiently fishing in the stream, or sailing slowly off to another resting-place; to look out for the early arrival of the spring migrants; to hear the cuckoo's welcome voice, or, by the delightful turr-turr of the turtledoves in the woods, to be reminded that for six months, at least, we might say, with Virgil's Melibæus,

"Nec gemere aeria cessabit turtur ab ulmo."

Pleasant, too, though telling of winter's approach, would it be to see every roof crowded with the swallow-tribe, and many a field by the cliffs covered with the beautiful *yellow* wagtails, when these birds were preparing to leave us for awhile for milder climes.

In October the woodcocks would pour in, so exhausted in the early morning from their flight, that you could almost pick them up as they feebly moped along the ditches. Later on towards winter, the Norwegian thrushes would arrive, the fieldfares and the redwings—the latter called by Linnæus the nightingale of Norway, but known by the local name of the wynnol—all seeking a region milder than their native shores; and the motions of these birds it would be very interesting to observe through the cold weather, as they endeavoured to pick up a scanty sustenance from the lee sides of the hedges.

In this district the life of almost every kind of bird might be studied, even down to the very swans, which, when frozen out of their lake at Abbotsbury, inside the eastern shore of the great bay, might be seen and heard, winging their way down the valley of the pleasant river, which flowed across three of the western shires to join the sea not far from Chalcombe Head. Interesting, too, would it be to see how the rare appearance of the kite would set all the small birds quivering; and to hear the poultry in the farmyard piteously proclaiming the appearance of the enemy overhead. Pleasant also would it ever be to see the flights of terns sweep gracefully by, or to note the dotterels flitting about the beach beside the cove. A bit of nature's secrets would be the finding of the habitat, rare in the south of England, of the dipper or water-ouzel—a song-bird that dives, and wades, and swims—to watch its motions under water, and to find its nest year after year in the same stream.

The view from the Head is one of the finest along our fine coast. At one end of the great bay there stretches, outside, the grey mass of Portland; at the other end we may see, in clear weather, past Torbay, Berry Head, and Dartmouth, that Start Point which bears, in its designation, the word which we have in

the name of that pretty fire-tailed bird, common in the combes, the redstart. On a dark night we may watch with interest the varied revolving lights of the light-houses on these two extremities of the great bay. Then, at times, it is a glorious sight to see the sun set behind the distant tors of Dartmoor, and to catch the twin granite peaks of Heytor standing out distinct against the glow and radiance of the western sky.

Of historic and poetic memories, a perfect wealth lies all around. The inland heights, which we may catch with our eye, were a chain of hill-forts—now called burys or castles—which were fought over, and no doubt bled over, ages before the Romans or the English came over to conquer the land. Looking across to the three-shired river-valley we may see what is left of the house where was born the greatest of English commanders, the man under whom the English marched proudly to victory at Blenheim and Ramilies and Malplaquet. A little further up the same valley we look on the now sleepy little town which was the birthplace of the professor who bewitched Oxford with the charms of geology—a town which existed as a British village long before Roman times, and whose name is borne by a special kind of Turkey carpet, invented here, but now made in busier regions. A little below lies a grey-walled and ivy-clad ruin, which was the ancient home of the Courtenay family; and not far off was the home of the Bonvilles, a famous race that fought, and bled, and perished in the Wars of the Roses.

Close by, in the western combe, nestles picturesquely the house, now a farmhouse, where was born the founder of one of the Oxford colleges; and, in the old village church, the attention of little boys used to be diverted from the sermon by counting the effigies of the founder's mother and the twenty children borne by her to her two husbands, which stood, in two little diverging rows, behind her. Not far off up the bay stands the little cobb—a quite local term for a pier or small harbour—where landed the invasion of the ill-fated Monmouth, known by the peasantry as King Monmouth, which came to so disastrous an end at Sedgemoor, the last battle that has been fought, or it is hoped will ever be fought, on English soil! On the other side of the bay, behind the Berry Head that we look across to, landed the later invasion by the Prince of Orange, which brought in the dynasty that now rules us.

Looking seawards we have immediately on our right a landslip, more than a century old, where lie

> "Rocks, crags, and knolls, confusedly hurled,
> The fragments of an earlier world,"

while halfway up the cliff is one of the mouths of a quarry of hard chalk that runs under the down—the other mouths being a mile inland—which has probably been worked for upwards of a thousand years, has furnished materials for almost all the old churches and edifices within a circuit of many miles, and has

had its stones deftly carved and fashioned into the delicately shaped foliage, fretwork, and finial that we admire in the fine old cathedral at Exeter. All about us, too, lie sites associated with those great sailors who fought nobly—as so many Devonshire men did—in Britain's Salamis, the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

Two or three out of many of the near poetic spots may well be recalled. Near the head of the neighbouring river dwelt Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, when Raisley Calvert had, by his legacy of £900, enabled them to cultivate their famous "plain living and high thinking;" here they were visited by Coleridge, and here the gifted trio would "walk the lovely meadows above the combes," and cultivate poetic intercourse, and enjoy from the hill-tops the glorious view over the whole of the great west bay.

Just over the hills on the west is a sweet Devonshire river-valley, where were born two very famous men. One was Samuel Taylor Coleridge—logician, metaphysician, bard—whom Wordsworth called

> "The rapt one of the godlike forehead, the heaven-eyed creature,"

and of whom Swinburne says: "Of his best verses, I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them, nor ever can have; they are of the highest kind, jewels of the diamond's price, flowers of the rose's rank, but unlike any rose or diamond known." This small town has been immortalised by Thackeray in *Pendennis* as "Clavering St. Mary," a slight variation only from its current name—and Thackeray's bits of description well set forth some of the charms of the scenery of "Fairoaks and the little river Brawl," among which he spent some of his early days.

Not far down the valley of the same "little river Brawl," there still stands, in good preservation, the farmhouse where was born one of the foremost amongst the worthies who adorned the spacious age of Queen Elizabeth—Sir Walter Raleigh.

With scenes and spots like these, it is surely pleasant to be able to associate a land so rich in all varieties of bird-life; and especially of that headland which stands prominent in its midst.

The flora of the region would well repay a study; but the bird-life, together with a few of the local spots made memorable by famous men, may well stand alone; and the exact position of the headland may be veiled, though, to those who know it, as transparently veiled as Thackeray's "Clavering St. Mary," under the name of Chalcombe Head.

Richmond. W. J. C. Miller.

THE BRITISH AVIFAUNA—ITS CHANGES AND PRESENT CHARACTER.

(Concluded from page 125.*)*

AS to the idiosyncrasies of birds, we may take the instance of Baillon's crake, of which Mr. Hudson says that there is reason to believe that it was once a summer resident and breeder in Great Britain. If it was ever so, in any numbers, it is difficult to imagine how the bird destroyer could have been the occasion of its loss to us. How long would it take to exterminate the "British race" of corncrake, water rail and spotted crake? It may safely be stated that if Baillon's crake chose to come here to breed—had indeed ever chosen to come in any numbers—it would take, or have taken still longer to extirpate this small, shy, skulking bird. We may say the same of some others. Many birds for some obscure reasons are always local in their distribution; others suffer much from bad weather and changes in the face of the country. The Dartford warbler, for instance, wants a well-bushed furzy heath or common, and is liable to be almost exterminated in severe seasons by great snow-storms. It really seems that some species exist with us only on sufferance as it were, holding on with difficulty so long as circumstances continue favourable, and liable to be wiped out at any time when the conditions of life become unpropitious. The sand grouse came in flocks, and many of them had protection, but they could not hold on at all.

Again, some birds are shy by nature, and will not bear the presence of man. This can be noticed in the avifauna wherever you go. It is doubtful whether the great bustard, even if not persecuted, could have borne to live in our crowded England, especially agricultural East Anglia, once its home. Mr. Hudson says: "It was, in other words, deliberately extirpated." But Stevenson writes: "Its extirpation was doubtless caused by man, but indirectly . . . . Its chief destroyer was most assuredly the agriculturist." Finding that his crops wanted shelter he planted long belts of trees. "This intersecting of the open country was intolerable to the bustard, which could not bear to be within reach of anything that might conceal an enemy." The change from rye to wheat growing, the use of the drill and the hoe caused the destruction of most of the eggs, as the birds nearly always bred in the winter corn. No one can read Stevenson's charming "Introduction" to the *Birds of Norfolk* without seeing at once the enormous effect of drainage and cultivation upon the English avifauna.

This shyness is more remarkable in big birds than in small birds, and is perhaps one reason why the "noblest" forms disappear first. Gilbert White wrote long ago to Daines Barrington: "Most kind of birds seem to me to be wild and shy, somewhat in proportion to their bulk. . . . . The golden-

crested wren (the smallest British bird) will stand unconcerned till you come within three or four yards of it, while the bustard (*otis*), the largest British land fowl, does not care to admit a person within so many furlongs." This is, partly at all events, why the large fine birds disappear with the advance of civilisation before the smaller species.

Some families of birds are tamer and more inclined to court the company of man than others; but even among them there are exceptions. The crow family is a good instance of this. Far more rookeries are placed close to human habitations than at a distance from them—and this despite the annual rook-shooting when the branchers are out of the nests in May. The carrion crow, a wild wary bird as a rule, becomes tame when he is safe. We have heard his croak in the early hours of a summer morning in Kensington (perhaps the cry of one of the birds which, we are told, live in Holland Park and sometimes nest in Kensington Gardens), and the tameness of crows in Switzerland was truly surprising. You will find the magpie a difficult bird to shoot in England now, but we read in "Yarrell" that it was not always of so retiring a disposition in this country, and that in Scandinavia it is a familiar bird about homesteads. Yet, who ever knew jays tame and familiar? They are ever birds of the woodlands. When Mr. Hudson writes of rooks, magpies, moorhens, dabchicks and shy wood-pigeons, "all at once grown strangely tame," and breeding in parks and squares and gardens, he mentions some species peculiarly amenable to taming influences. Some of them are to be found tame in the country. Moorhens get nearly as familiar as barndoor fowls. I knew a village garden, with a pond at the bottom of it, where dabchicks always bred, and shy wood-pigeons grow tame in the breeding season in districts where they are among the wildest of birds in the winter, and nest in ornamental trees in gardens. On the other hand, why should woodpeckers be shy while nuthatches are so familiar? And who (knowing the bird) would expect the stone curlew to be ever as tame as the peewit, though both nest on fallows? The shy stone curlew has gone (from some of its former haunts), while the bolder peewit is still with us, despite the gathering of its eggs. The bittern never made itself familiar like the heron, though both were protected by law as long ago as 1533. The bullfinch is always a less confiding bird than the goldfinch, although it has been no more persecuted, save in the case of the few birds which are not contented with hedge buds in spring, but must needs come into gardens. Gulls cannot be well tamer than I have seen them at a fashionable sea-coast watering place, where in less than a month everybody would be free to shoot them.

That the St. Kilda wren "no longer exists" seems rather a bold statement to make. I have no recent data on the subject, but a correspondent of the *Zoologist* points out that the wren of St. Kilda, the existence of which was recorded as long ago as

1698, was rare and difficult to meet with in June, 1883, about the time of its second "discovery." In one locality there the wren must surely have been fairly safe, viz., the great cliff, Conacher (1,220 ft.), on the face of which luxuriant herbage grew in every cleft and fissure. The writer in the *Zoologist* was of opinion that it would take some of the best cragsmen in the Alpine Club to extirpate it; and he corrects the general idea that St. Kilda is entirely barren, saying that, on the other hand, it possesses 110 phanerogams including elder (planted), *Salix herbacea*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica cinerea*, and honeysuckle.

That "the noblest and most beautiful forms, all those which gave greatest lustre to our wild bird life, were first singled out for destruction . . . . ; leaving only the forms that had no distinguishing mark," is really too cruel and scathing a remark to make about poor little England's birds while we still possess goldfinch, bullfinch, chaffinch, kingfisher, hawfinch (increasing), yellow wagtail and green woodpecker in plenty, for beauty; and, even in crowded England (not to speak of Scotland and the isles) herons, greater black-backed gulls (in winter) and cormorants, for bigness. We have lost some big birds it is true. For the loss (or rather for the diminution in numbers—for I do not think any of the resident species are absolutely exterminated yet, and some of them were perhaps never very common) of most of our diurnal birds of prey, we must undoubtedly blame man directly. But the rapidity with which the kite (which from historical evidence seems to have been quite a common bird at one time) changed from a common to a rare species, is remarkable and very curious.* From what we know of it, the kite seems to have been essentially a bird of the woods; and it was exterminated in most English counties before game-preserving had reached anything like the height to which it has now come. Perhaps the destruction of woods in many parts of the country weakened its position. And the farmer's wife could never have loved the kite. Indeed, if we had many kites in England now it would be bad for poultry keepers, if we are to judge by what was written on the subject in the seventeenth century. We lost the capercaillie it is true, more by destruction of forest than anything else, and have got it again. We have lost the bustard, which would have been hard to keep under altered conditions, and the great auk, too, though history does not tell us definitely when the latter bred on English coasts. To keep the great auk would have been as difficult as to keep the moa; it seems to have been ill adapted to live in a time when the doctrine (and practice) of the survival of the fittest is pushed so strongly. If we have lost the crane, it is equally true

* Lord Lilford writes:—"I have also heard it stated that the kites were exterminated by a very severe winter, and this, I think, is more likely, for although most of the records sent in to me are somewhat vague as to date, from what I can gather our kites seem to have disappeared suddenly, and not gradually diminished in numbers, as though shot and trapped off by gamekeepers."—*Notes on Birds of Northamptonshire.*

that we lost it long ago, before "collectors" were heard of, when sportsmen were few and weapons not very efficient. The eggs of the crane were protected by an Act passed in the reign of Henry VIII., but Willughby, in 1676, could not assert that the birds bred in the English fens at that date. Pennant wrote (1776) that the inhabitants of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire were scarcely acquainted with the crane (as a visitor). And he was only able to mention a single instance of it being seen in the island in his time. A glance at the present distribution of the crane in the breeding season leaves little room for wonder that it should have deserted England so long ago. At the present day we certainly could not afford a large shy species like this a suitable habitat. To read the experiences of Woolly in Lapland should teach us this.

Let us, by all means preserve, by the most rigorous measures available, the resident species and summer residents which seem in any danger of extermination. Above all, let us keep a watchful eye on the egg-collector, who, not even content with a huge "series" of "whole clutches" collected by himself, makes it worth the while of the dealing collector to go out and "work" districts where rarest species are to be found and plunder the nests. It is greatly to be regretted that some amateur (save the mark!) naturalists "work" their own districts for the same purposes. We may hope that some good will be done by the Bill now before Parliament, if it has the good fortune to become law. The chief mischief now is done by the egg-collectors. People are shy of openly breaking the law with the gun, and shooting protected birds in the close time. The dealing collector has had his wings clipped with regard to the birds, but with regard to eggs he still spreads abroad his snares, and flourishes. The harm done by the "whole clutch" collector is enormous. If no young birds are reared by a rare species, represented in a district by only a few pairs, the species must die out in the locality in time. It has been said by these collectors that it is better to take the "whole clutch" of eggs rather than to leave one, two, or three eggs, because in the former case the birds build or lay again and rear a whole brood instead of only one, two, or three young birds. But what security have we that another "whole clutch" man will not take the second nest? And again, it cannot be so well for a species to be reared only from second layings. If a species breeds naturally early in the spring, it is a proof that there is some good reason for its young being reared up early in the season. But we must remember that "whole clutch" collecting has been extensively practised only in, comparatively speaking, recent years.

But after all, it is well not to cry "wolf" loudly when there is only a fox prowling round. We have still, and I believe we shall long have, a very interesting and a wonderfully varied avifauna within the small area of the British islands. And it would not be difficult to find a country where the "hateful monotony,"

the "oppressive sameness," would be far more apparent than it is in England. Perhaps we may say that the chief beauty of the British avifauna is a modest beauty, and this constitutes its greatest charm in the minds of many of its admirers. In reviewing its modern character, while we allow that the severity of our winter climate, and the almost total absence of native evergreen trees (except firs) and shrubs renders our inland parts, in winter, less suitable than they might be for any other than hardy small birds; yet, we must not overlook those dozen beautiful, secret warblers, besides various members of other families, which come to delight us with their songs and with their charming individuality, and to hide their nests in our wealth of summer vegetation. Those who have not yet taken up the study of our small birds and wish to gain an idea of its delights, cannot do better than read Mr. Warde Fowler's pamphlet on the marsh warbler, and learn therein the lasting interest and pleasure which the study of that little brown bird has brought to more than one field naturalist.

These pages have been penned, first, because I think that a perusal of *Lost British Birds* would give a stranger, and anyone unacquainted with the subject, an unduly unfavourable idea of our avifauna; and, secondly, because I do not think that sufficient importance is attached in the pamphlet to the vast change which must necessarily come over the avifauna of a country when the face of that country is altered by drainage and greatly increased cultivation.

O. V. Aplin.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

A Narrow Narrow World (Swan Sonnenschein), is the first of the Band of Mercy Prize Series (to consist of six half-crown volumes) which Miss Edith Carrington has undertaken to write. We have here in narrative form accounts of the inhabitants of an ash-heap, and of the little boy who played there. The different insects talk pleasantly, and so do the human beings; and a great deal of information is conveyed in an attractive manner, as is usually the case in Miss Carrington's books. The boy's father takes what we cannot help calling an unduly severe line in regard to collectors, and we regret this the more because an exaggerated tone in matters of this kind is likely to cause unfavourable comment, and to diminish the usefulness of this series of volumes. We are sorry that Miss Carrington's text is disfigured by a large number of "illustrations" which do not illustrate—a fault which we have observed in other publications of the same firm. The worn-out feeble blocks entitled "A Rainbow" (p. 143), the "Moth" on p. 125, and nearly all the page illustrations, headings, and tail-pieces, are distinct disfigurements; and the other cuts—a job lot brought together from all sorts of places—do not enhance the appearance of the book.

Poems and Lyrics of Nature (Walter Scott, 1s.), is the latest addition to the "Canterbury Poets." It deserves a long notice, but as that is impossible, we will not defer a short one, because we hope that many will be induced by our recommendation to take it with them as a holiday companion. Mrs. Rinder has done her editing well, and her introduction is interesting and suggestive.

The volume is restricted to selections from contemporary poets, omitting Mr. George Meredith, Mr. W. E. Henley, Mr. R. L. Stevenson, and one or two more, and also excluding poems of the sea, which have formed the subject of another anthology in the same series. With all these reservations, however, enough remains to make a very attractive collection, and if the sixty-five writers whose verses are included are not all worthy to be ranked as "poets," we may be thankful for the exclusion of a far greater number who, in their own estimation, are entitled to this distinction. As it is, we have excellent selections from Mr. A. C. Benson, Mr. Norman Gale, Mr. Robert Bridges, the Hon. Roden Noel—whose recent death we have to deplore—Mr. John Davidson, and others whose work has been noticed in these pages; while Mr. Swinburne, Miss Rossetti, Mr. William Watson, Mrs. Hinkson (Miss Tynan), and Miss Ingelow are represented —the last-named very inadequately—with other favourites. The book is just the size for the pocket, from which it will often be taken, if we get any fine weather, during autumn walks.

The July instalment of the *Country Month by Month* takes us into watery regions—to the brink of the sea, the bog, and the stream—pleasant places all this year in the brief spell of real summer weather with which the month signalised its advent, when the passage for Leigh Hunt's graphic "Now" essay which Mrs. Owen chooses as a text for her "Wild Life" chapter seemed once more appropriate. When complete this series will form a dainty present, and might well be issued in two volumes, for, be it remarked, the monthly instalments are noteworthy for quality rather than quantity.

To say that a book is issued by Messrs. Dent & Co. is to conjure up a vision of an elegant combination of binding, printing, paper and illustration; and such a union is presented by Mr. H. W. Mabie's *Under the Trees and Elsewhere*. Mr. Mabie is presumably an American, for he talks about "color" and "skepticism," and a "somber" woodland path. They are pretty, quiet, thoughtful essays, the papers which make up this pretty book, with much about Nature, and full of sympathy with her teachings; yet wanting in the knowledge which made Jefferies what he was and gives the "Son of the Marshes" his special charm. Still they are pleasant reading.

Canon Rawnsley's volume of *Idylls and Lyrics of the Nile* (Nutt, 5s.), has at least one distinctive note: with five exceptions, "these are printed now for the first time." In these days, when our verse-writers show undue haste in collecting their scattered effusions into volumes, this is something to be thankful for. But how shall one who has never strayed beyond Greece pronounce an opinion on poems which have for their subjects "The Tomb of Thi," "Kom Ombo," "The Pyramid of Men-Kan-ra," and the like? Yet all can feel something of the restfulness which marks these lines on "Evening by the Nile," even if he wishes for a glossary to tell him what a "Sakîyeh wheel" is like, or what a "shadûf-pole" resembles:—

"The dogs are barking at the sun,
Dark lines of women homeward pass,
Each bearing on her head sweet grass,
And at their sides the children run.

"The buffalo with nose in air,
The camel grumbling at his load,
Unbidden take their evening road,
And leave behind the clover square.

"Wrapped in their cloud of dust the sheep,
And laden asses homeward go,
Within the village wall they know
Will be security and sleep.

"And this with plough upon his back,
And that with wooden hoe in hand,
The bare-legged scanty-skirted band
Of labourers seek the village track.

" No more the wet Sakîyeh wheel
Above the cotton gleams and burrs,
The shadûf-pole no longer stirs—
Forsaken for the evening meal.

" And stooping from the heaven above,
While all the air about us sings
With music of ten thousand wings,
Hies to her towery home the dove."

SELBORNIANA.

Children's Country Holiday Fund.—Two years ago (*N..N*, 1892, p. 123) we brought before our readers the claims of this excellent Society, not, we are glad to know, without effect. We desire to do so again, and we cannot find a better way than by reprinting the following letter of the Bishop of London, which has appeared in the daily press :—" The *British Medical Journal* told us a few weeks ago that the slow growth of the children in their city homes is more than made up by their two or three weeks' stay in the country. Anyone who feels the staleness of our London air will recognise how it must tell on the little denizens of the more crowded parts of the metropolis, those who are actively engaged in the work of the fifty local committees of the Children's Country Holidays Fund can see the difference in the children when they return from the care of their "cottage mothers." The Council of the Fund makes no distinction of creed ; need of change is the only claim. Indeed, special arrangements are made that the children of Jews, Roman Catholics, or such Nonconformists as may desire it, may be with those of their own religion during their holiday. Last year 28,589 children had not less than a fortnight's fresh air through the fund. The parents contributed what they could, but the subscriptions of the public did not increase, and unless at least £5,000 more is given for this summer many must be disappointed. The working expenses of the Society are exceptionally small, and every gift of ten shillings secures at least one child's fortnight. Will your readers send donations to the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, the Hon. Treasurer, at 10, Buckingham street, Strand, W.C. ?"

Sir F. Leighton and Field Advertisements.—We have not received any report of the second annual meeting of the National Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising, but we clip from the daily press the following remarks of Sir Frederic Leighton, who was unable to be present :—" I am glad of this opportunity of assuring you in writing of my entire sympathy with the spirit which animates your Society. Nobody can resent more warmly than I do the vulgar bluntness of feeling which leads men to deface, or to lend themselves to the defacing of, the charms of rural scenery with staring advertisements. I include those who lend themselves to this barbarism ; for the tradesman who pushes in this manner his pill, his plaster, or his nostrum is not more blameworthy, but indeed less, than he who hires out his meadow or his coppice for such a purpose, and earns a pittance at the cost of so much offence. Never more than in our overridden days was the soothing, restful atmosphere, that breathes from natural scenery, precious, needed. Never less than now can we afford to see its sweet silences invaded by these blatant blemishes of the strife of competing druggists and manufacturers, which, when we leave our towns, we would fain for a while forget. You will render good service if you abate this evil custom even a little."

Selbornians and Local Floras.—Our attention has been called to a passage on p. 140 of NATURE NOTES for July, in which writers of local floras are " warned not to state exact localities, lest the indiscriminate collector should exterminate all the rare plants." The Editor of NATURE NOTES is not responsible

for what appears on that page, and by no means endorses the warning in question. The danger of extermination is greatly exaggerated, as will be seen when it is remembered (1) that local floras appeal, not to "the indiscriminate collector," but to the botanist, who hardly needs such a warning; (2) that, with some few exceptions, our rare plants are insignificant in appearance, and difficult of detection, and thus unlikely to attract the "indiscriminate collector;" (3) that localities are seldom stated with such exactness as to lead to the anticipated result. We are convinced that the cause Selbornians have at heart is retarded rather than advanced by too great insistence on points of this kind: it is not only theologians who "strain principles until they are in danger of snapping."

An Oversight.—Several readers have called our attention to the slips in Mr. Heneage Legge's interesting article on "Gilbert White in Sussex" (p. 126), in which White's daughter and son-in-law are spoken of. The Editor must have been anticipating his holiday when he allowed these to pass, for everyone knows that "White of Selborne" was never married.

How to Protect Birds.—Mrs. Brightwen in her admirable paper on "How to Protect Birds" (*N.N.*, 1894, p. 42), says that among other ways of encouraging village children to take interest in natural history, "small prizes might be offered for the best papers on our English birds, and all the items about them that can be obtained." Having done this for the last two years in this village, I venture to give my experience, thinking that it may perhaps help others in doing similar work. Last year I gave seven or eight questions on general natural history subjects, such as how to tell what a bird feeds on by the shape of its beak and claws, what is meant by the migration of birds, what are the habits and uses of the mole, &c. Of course there was a little difficulty in the children having access to books which might help them, but we had then a schoolmaster who was fond of natural history, and though of course no copying was allowed, he let them read several of his own books before writing their answers, and the result was that I had several admirable papers sent in — strange to say, all from girls, to whom I gave three prizes in money. This year, however, the nature-loving schoolmaster having gone, I adopted a different plan. In our village library we have a good many books on natural history, and I selected one, viz., Mr. Theodore Wood's charming *Nature and her Servants*, and set seven questions, all of which could be answered after having read it. I gave the questions in March, reading them aloud in the school, and telling the children that anyone who liked to go in for the examination could get the book from the library, but must only keep it a fortnight, as others would want it, and that all answers must be sent to me by July 15. This year several boys as well as girls have gone in for it, and the papers are now coming in to me. I am going to give books on natural history as prizes this year, as I think that will be better than money, and will be a means of spreading knowledge on the subject in the village. If anyone desires it, I should be most happy to send a copy of my list of questions, or the children's answers to them a little later on, when the prizes have been given.

Horsell Vicarage, Woking. ROSE TURLE.

[We are sure that many of our readers will be glad to know more about Mrs. Turle's experiences.—ED. *N.N.*]

The Buffalo.—The buaffalo is not yet quite exterminated in South America. In a letter from my son, who is ranching in Coalmila, Mexico, he says: "A small herd of buffalo, some forty heads, has been twice seen about a day's ride from this place, in a valley between two chains of hills. So they are not extinct yet. It has got into the Texas papers, and I expect the country will swarm with hunters before long, endeavouring to kill one of the last."

Alston, Cumberland. I. E. PAGE.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Wood-pigeons in the City (p. 138).—I regret to have to report that the attempted rearing of the second brood of the young wood-pigeons hatched this spring in the churchyard of St. Botolph, Aldersgate Street, has resulted as unfortunately as that of the first. Of the two eggs of the second sitting one was addled, but the other was safely hatched about the end of the third week in June. Two days later the young bird was found by the garden-keeper lying dead on the grass in the centre of the garden. It would seem as if the parent birds in their anxiety had endeavoured to remove their offspring from the dangerous situation of the nest, and the scene of the former disasters, and had thus brought about this lamentable event. The old birds remained in the vicinity of the churchyard, on and off for a week or more, but have not been seen during the last fortnight, and it is supposed that they have taken their final departure.

Stoke Newington, N. HARRY CHIPPERFIELD.

Nightjars.—I have often put up nightjars in the middle of the day, but have never found their eggs or young; can any of your readers inform me of their habits? I want to know if the cock and hen lie near each other, as usually I have only put up one of the birds, and could see no sign of the other; also whether the hen utters their peculiar note, and whether both birds assist in incubation. If one bird is flushed, does it follow that the other is close by? I shall be glad if you can supply me with this information, as the many books I have read on the subject do not give it. On the 24th June, I put up a *pair* of these birds; they were lying close together, but there was no sign of eggs or young, and on returning to the spot three hours afterwards, they were not there again.

Addiscombe, Croydon. GEORGE F. ELY.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. T. R.—We hope to use your communication, but like many more, it is held back for want of space.

J. L. B.—No, it is Sanicle (*Sanicula europæa*).

S. P. H.—Swine-cress (*Senebiera Coronopus*).

E. L. C. E.—(1) *Geum reptans.* (2) *Erigeron alpinum.* (3) *Alsine verna.* (4) *Saxifraga oppositifolia.* (5) *S. bryoides.* (6) *S. controversa.* (7) *Androsace septentrionalis.* Some of the specimens were rather unsatisfactory.

H. E.—Is it not a Turtledove? Kindly read our rule 4.

The Editor cannot undertake to reply privately to correspondents sending specimens to be named, nor can he name more than six plants at a time.

Many communications are, as usual, held over for want of space.

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Poisoned Grain.—The Council deeply regret to learn that, for some time past, an extensive sale of this cruel and illegal agent for the destruction of bird and animal life has been carried on throughout East Anglia and elsewhere. Members are aware that the Society has no funds wherewith to take action in such cases, and they can only regret that the Society which has, does not see fit to do so. A sample bag of the grain can be seen at the Selborne Society's rooms.

Annual Excursion of the Society's Field Clubs.—On July 7, the members met at Merstham for a ramble to Caterham Valley. Professor Boulger kindly conducted the party, pointing out many features of interest, especially botanical and geological. Tea was served at Caterham, and after an address from the Professor on the "Flora of the Chalk Downs" the members returned, highly gratified with the pleasant and instructive ramble.

Obituary.—The Council have to record the great loss the Society has sustained by the death of one of their Vice-Presidents, the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, and a resolution of condolence and regret has been forwarded to Lady Arthur Hervey.

The next Meetings of the Council will be held on August 1 and September 5. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee will meet on August 15 and September 19.

The August 15 meeting will be held by permission of Dr. Dudley Buxton at his house, 82, Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, W.

Field Club Meetings for August.

August 4.—None.

August 11.—Leatherhead to Boxhill. Meet at Leatherhead Station 3.24 p.m. Trains leave Waterloo, at 11.20 a.m. and 2.40 p.m., calling at Clapham Junction and Wimbledon Station. Return third class fares by these trains 1s. 9d. Returning from Leatherhead at 7.15, 8.40, and 9.35 p.m.

August 18.—Pinner to Ruislip. Meet at Pinner (Metropolitan Station, 3.30 p.m.) Trains from Broad Street, 2.20 p.m. Day ticket, 1s. 10d. Baker Street, 2.37 p.m. Day ticket, 1s. 3d.

August 25.—Ashford (Middlesex), to Laleham and Sunbury. Meet at Ashford Station. Train from Waterloo, 2.10 p.m.

September 1.—Broxbourne to Wormley Woods. Meet at Broxbourne Station 2.45 p.m. Train from Liverpool Street, 2.15 p.m. Clapton 1 p.m. Day ticket, 1s. 6d.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Bath.—The Annual "At Home" by kind invitation of the President of the Branch, Mr. H. D. Skrine, was held on June 21. As on many previous occasions, a most enjoyable day was spent, and a hearty vote of thanks was tendered to the President for his kindness.

This Branch has just issued its Annual Report, Rules, List of Districts, Members, &c., in pamphlet form. The whole is a tribute to the untiring perseverance of the Hon Secretary, Dr. George Norman.

City of London.—This Branch (in connection with the St. Nicholas Club), was authorised and duly enrolled at the last Council Meeting.

Croydon.—*The Biographer* for June contains an interesting tribute to the life and work of the Hon. Sec. and Founder of this Branch, Mr. Edward A. Martin. As the author of numerous articles in natural history and scientific journals, and of several works dealing with the study of geology in a popular form, Mr. Martin is well known.

Wimbledon and Putney.—The Council have to thank this Branch for the largest Branch contribution yet received. The list of Branch payments is unavoidably held over till next month.

*** All communications for this page must be sent *before* the 15th of each month to the Hon. Sec., Magazine and Leaflet Committee, Selborne Society, 20, Hanover Square, W.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 57. SEPTEMBER, 1894. Vol. V.

ASNAPPER, THE OWL.

WHILST enjoying the fresh beauty of my garden in the month of May, with its wealth of flowers and rich variety of leafage, my eyes happened to light upon a greyish tuft of feathers in a rhododendron bush. Curiosity led me to examine this tuft more closely, when, to my surprise, I found it to be a young brown owl—alive, indeed, but in a very exhausted condition. It appeared to be only a few weeks old, fully feathered, yet unable to feed itself; I suppose it had fallen out of the nest and was dying for lack of food. I need hardly say I carried the poor orphan indoors, and did my best to feed and restore him, and right well did he second my efforts. A juicy, uncooked mutton chop was cut up and mixed with feathers, and with resounding snaps of his great beak the morsels were received and swallowed. A second chop was disposed of before my friend seemed satisfied, and with such a mighty appetite I felt there would be no difficulty in rearing him. Next morning we happened to find two dead sparrows and a mouse, these soon disappeared and had to be supplemented by a piece of raw meat; and if this is the daily diet of a very young owl we may form some idea of the way in which full-grown birds must reduce the hordes of mice and rats which would otherwise overrun the country.

Whenever we passed the owl's cage he gave a resounding snap with his beak, not viciously but as a friendly recognition, and somehow this habit suggested the name of the Assyrian king, the "noble Asnapper," until this, familiarly contracted to "Snap" for every-day use, became the recognised title of our new pet.

Asnapper lived quietly enough during the day in a large cage

well covered from the light, but towards evening, when he had enjoyed a second repast of raw meat, he began to wake up and long for exercise. He was allowed his liberty in the house, and made full use of this privilege by going about from room to room, either running along the floor like a grey rabbit, or taking short flights with his noiseless wings. He would gravely pursue his way up the stairs a step at a time, and seemed to enjoy watching cattle in the fields whilst sitting motionless on a window sill.

Until the bird could feed itself it would have been no kindness to let it go out of doors and starve, so I resolved to make the creature's life as happy as possible, whilst I had thus a good opportunity of learning the habits of this interesting species of bird. I could not help being somewhat afraid of his formidable curved beak, which looked as if it could inflict a severe wound, but I soon learned how gently Asnapper could use it ; he would play with my fingers and hold them with such care that we had merry games of play at evening recreation time, when he looked to be let out of his cage and go where he pleased for an hour or two.

If allowed to be in the drawing-room the sociable bird made himself quite one of the party. Perched on the back of a chair he would watch all that went on with a grave air of consideration, or else he would amuse himself by chasing a ball, or cotton reel upon the floor as if trying to make believe it was a mouse. I could not have thought there was so much latent fun in a solemn-looking owl, but then we are never out at night perched up in the tree branches to see what goes on there amongst young owlets. This afforded us, therefore, a rather unusual glimpse into the habits and manners of the bird of wisdom in his merry days of youth.

This species, called the brown or tawny owl (*Syrnium stridula*), is found in most of the counties of England ; it is rare in Scotland, and has not, I believe, been found in Ireland. It generally retires to thick woods during the day, coming out at night to feed upon rabbits, moles, rats, mice, frogs, and insects.

I have several times observed a brown owl flying quite late in the evening closely pursued by enraged blackbirds screaming their loudest notes of anger and fear, and I gather from this that the owl is apt to prey upon small birds and possibly rob their nests of eggs or young fledglings.

Several writers assert that this bird also feeds on fish, being able to catch those swimming near the surface. There can be no doubt of the extreme value of owls in reducing the number of rats and mice, and it is to be wished that landowners, in their own interest, if for no better motive, would take pains to instruct their gamekeepers to protect such useful allies to the farmer and gardener. I met with an amusing instance of the value of the owl as a mouser when staying at a farmhouse in Surrey. The farmer's daughter told me her brother had just discovered "a

'howl's' nest in the pigeon coo,"* and going up a ladder to examine it more closely had found two eggs in the nest, and ranged around it were fourteen dead mice! If that was the result of one evening's foraging, we need no other proof that owls are worthy of encouragement and protection.

I have not as yet heard Asnapper make any sound except the characteristic snap of his beak, and a low whining cry of eager pleasure at sight of his accustomed food. When he is full grown we shall no doubt be favoured with his loud melancholy hoot, a sound with which we are already very familiar, as we hear the voice of his relations at intervals during the night in the gardens and woods around the house.

ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL WORK.

IT must be evident to all, that the fauna and flora of the districts round London are undergoing a change, due to the growth of the metropolis. Species which formerly abounded are now rare, and many which now abound will probably become extinct or extremely scarce during the next fifty years. This applies to plants, birds, or insects, and it is hard to imagine a more interesting or profitable investigation to be undertaken by a local society than one relating to these changes. First of all, I would collect all the old records of plants, birds, or insects found in the vicinity, and enter them in a book, which should be accessible to all members. Endeavours should then be made to learn what species were still to be found in the district, and their rarity or abundance. This would involve research extending over years, and in fact really endless; but in a few years the list might be brought to a sufficient state of completeness to give much of the information required.

Then, by comparison of past records with those of the present, we should learn that certain species had become rarer or extinct, while others remained in abundance. Years hence, our list would in its turn, be made the basis of comparison with a future list, and so, in this way, the changes in the natural history of the locality, indirectly due to human means, could be accurately estimated, while an interesting record of the past would be preserved. Nor is this all that would be gathered from this kind of research. The list of the present time would be found to contain some, perhaps many, species which did not previously occur here, or were not so common. Many foreign plants have more or less established themselves in the neighbourhood of London, and their spread from one locality to another should

* A local term for a pigeon house.

be carefully noted. Other foreign plants will be introduced accidentally, but after flourishing for one or two generations, will ultimately succumb; yet others will continue to exist at one spot for a long while, and yet fail to spread to the neighbouring localities. All such cases may be looked out for, and recorded in the note books of the Society.

As an example of the introduction of foreign plants, I may mention a case that came under my notice at Bedford Park. The people living next door to my home kept fowls in their back yard, which was, of course, very bare of vegetation. But after a while they left, and presently there sprung up a dense growth of plants of many kinds, covering the yard. I collected such of these as were unfamiliar to me (a good number) and took them to Mr. Baker at Kew, who was so kind as to look them over and tell me the names. They were south European weeds, the seeds of which must have come in the corn used to feed the poultry.

Among them, conspicuously, was the pretty pink-flowered *Saponaria Vaccaria*, which I have since found similarly introduced in the Rocky Mountains. It is a plant which seems very readily introduced, but which has poor capacity for establishing itself permanently out of its natural range.

Another interesting line of inquiry is that relating to the growth of plants on soil recently laid bare; and this is very easily pursued near London, in railway cuttings, gravel pits, and a variety of other places. It will usually be found that in such situations there spring up some plants which are different from those of the surrounding fields; these flourish for a while, but at length succumb, at least in most cases, to the inroads of the usual flora.

Connected with this, is the problem as to seeds germinating which were supposed to have been long buried in the soil. It has been said that plants spring up in soil from some distance below the surface, owing to the presence of dormant seeds therein; but while the fact of their springing up is not to be questioned, it is very far from being proved that the seeds were originally in the soil. It is easy to be mistaken on such a point, and experimental evidence is much needed. Some of the soil alleged to contain seeds should be carefully protected from all chance of receiving seeds blown by the wind or otherwise, and then if anything came up, the fact would have some weight in deciding the question.

Turning now to the zoology, there is one curious matter that deserves special consideration. In the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire there has, during the last thirty years or so, been a remarkable development of melanism among the moths; that is to say, several species of moths, usually brown or whitish, or variously marked, have lately come to produce black or blackish varieties in great abundance, and these latter have in certain species come to actually outnumber the type. Various reasons have been suggested for this, such as the

natural selection of dark specimens owing to their harmony with the colour of the darkened walls, &c., on which they rest. Some time ago it was asserted that in the neighbourhood of London no such melanism was to be observed; but since then several cases have come to light in which London moths are darker than those usually to be found in the country districts. Hence it appears that London melanism is at present a genuine phenomenon, though less marked than that of the north of England. Unfortunately, the available records seem quite inadequate to inform us whether the dark London varieties have had a very recent origin; but there is no reason why careful records should not be made now, so that hereafter the progress in the direction of further darkening, if any, could be accurately estimated.

The points touched upon are only a very few out of perhaps fifty that could be mentioned, so it is quite evident that the need for workers far exceeds the supply. While the reports of travellers are interesting enough, there is not the least occasion to go to the ends of the earth in order to discover new facts, and I suppose there is not a locality on this earth, excepting deserts and Arctic regions, which is so well examined by naturalists that one could not profitably spend a life-time in studying its fauna and flora.

Kingston, Jamaica. T. D. A. Cockerell.

DECEMBER IN NEW ZEALAND.

THERE are very often three or four weeks of dry, blowy weather about this time; the grass becomes crumbly and brown, though never so dry as upon the plains. Upon the uplands we have heavy dews, and sometimes during December I have seen the hills round the lake blanketed in fog up to eleven o'clock, or with peaks only showing like black islands in the whiteness. Taking advantage of the heat, the settlers then fire their felled forest lands. After a big bush fire the air is quite full of floating skeleton leaves of ash; they descend like snow from the smoky haze, and fall so lightly that once or twice I have been able to tell the species of tree to which they have belonged. Some timbers burn very much more readily than others, one of the least combustible is the fuchsia; by bushmen it is called "bucket-of-water," and in opener grass lands, after a few years only, the fuchsias remain vigorous and green. December of 1893, however, has been very wet indeed, and it looks as if again this year there will be little weather suitable for burning grass, fern, or forest. The fires that in dry seasons run over the hills do an immense amount of good, clearing out the rank grass, and destroying the stunted, nibbled fern and manuka.

In a climate where there is so little frost, a combination of rain and heat stimulates the growth of all sorts of worms in sheep, and especially in young stock. Except, perhaps, that the life history of these parasites might not be suitable for NATURE NOTES, instances of extraordinary transformations could be given. The wetter the season, the more do blights and mildews abound. In many parts of the run, the rust on rye grass gives quite a yellow tinge to the boots of anyone passing through it. This minute fungus originates in the barberry, and in the wheat districts of Europe the shrub has been, I believe, extirpated. Ergot, too, is bad in wet seasons, and sometimes causes losses of stock. From various diseases all the peach, cherry, and apple trees that used to grow wild on the run have died off during the last seven years. The peach is attacked with "yellow leaf" or "curl" blight, the leaves dropping off until, in autumn, only the tips of the boughs are green. Where horses, sheep, and wild swine used to wait under the trees and feed upon the fallen fruit, now only dead trees remain. The cherry groves, too, are succumbing, though the wild black cherry does better than the cultivated kinds. All kinds of blights and borers thrive upon the apple trees; the fact is that trees grow in New Zealand so easily and well up to a certain age, that but little care is taken of them, they are put in "to take their chance." As an example of wet and warmth, I have seen grass growing quite an inch long on the wool of living sheep. After a long drought, and then a couple of thunder showers, the meadows are white with mushrooms, their tiny parasols, pink lined, appearing in a profusion unknown at home. If, however, our own orchards are blighted, we have at least done something for those in a far country; our native ladybirds have successfully cleared the orange orchards of California from an insect which was doing great harm there.

Already upon the verandahs may be heard the rather shrill buzzing of the mason fly as it hovers for a moment ere creeping with closed wings into its home; in shape and colour it is not unlike a queen bee. This curious insect builds its clay cells beneath verandah shingles, in folds of curtains and suspended coats, in keyholes and the backs of books. Both male and female labour at the nest; whilst at work, biting and liquefying the clay that is carried in their jaws, they buzz continually. The load is moist though not wet, and about quarter the size of an ordinary pill; from its shape the clay is apparently picked in a single piece from the surface or side of some disintegrating lump of mould. After arriving with their loads, they take a few moments for breathing, panting like bees after a long flight, then the shrill buzzing begins and continues until the clay has been suitably adjusted. The mud is laid on in a form that reminds me of the swallows' nests at home. Very often, to save labour, several chambers are placed side by side. When the cell is ready, an egg is laid and the interior filled up with the bodies

of paralyzed spiders, five or seven are in each cell; they are apparently injected with some antiseptic liquid, as they keep for many weeks. This arrangement I have seen described by one naturalist as "a beautiful provision of Nature"; by another, as "the most cold-blooded and revolting cruelty"; perhaps it may be both. When the egg hatches in the cell, the grub devours the ill-starred spiders one by one, until of an age to emerge.

Though much less often seen, there is another insect of somewhat similar habits on the run; it digs a pit in the loose bush mould, captures its prey, and before burying it lays an egg in the body of the victim; the grave is then covered in. The spiders used by the mason fly are very beautiful, elaborately marked with silver and gold. The winged insect itself lives on the more innocent diet of nectar of flowers. There are many other spiders on the run; perhaps the trapdoor spider is one of the most interesting, and the sudden closing of their lids has the effect of appearing to make the dry earth wink. These creatures have two exits from their Y-shaped homes, and when some insect or beetle tumbles down the hole, they wait at the junction of these two passages; thus they have a choice of seizing their prey from behind, or if it seems too formidable of escaping. The "death tick," as a flat browish-black spider is called, has the curious habit of making a ticking sound like a watch, or more exactly like the last dying rings of a spun coin before it altogether ceases to revolve. These "death ticks" may be oftenest heard at night and when the house is still; noticed for the first time, the noise is very remarkable. Another large spider, who stretches his nets in the bracken about this season, has assimilated the exact fluffy brown of the uncurling fronds. There are very minute species, too, that float on threads of gossamer, and others that in late autumn build a nest within a nest, depositing their eggs within an inner covering of spider silk. I was told only a few days ago of a red water spider that preys upon young trout; the fish were seized, I was informed, when in the hatching boxes, and during a very early stage of their existence. About 5,000 ova were hatched on the run this spring, and in nearly all the rivers of New Zealand, trout have been turned out. In some rivers, and especially at the river mouths, baskets of eight, ten, or twelve fish may be obtained, the average weight perhaps eight lbs. In other streams fish are more numerous and smaller; the great lakes are also full of trout, but, though they may be seen swimming in enormous shoals, they scorn any lure that has yet been tried. For stripping purposes fish have been taken up to thirty lbs. Indeed, the trouting in New Zealand nowadays is alone worth the trip from home. The fish are comparatively unsophisticated, too, and the wild scenery up the streams not to be surpassed.

Tutira Lake, Hawkes Bay, N.Z. H. GUTHRIE-SMITH.

TO A SWIFT IN CHURCH.

Out of God's sky-roofed temple into this,
His house where men may gather, thou art come,
To find a prison. Here thy voice is dumb,
But thy large soul demands the blue abyss,
For those wide wings beat fruitlessly, and miss
The lofty circles where earth's daily hum
Greets, with its undertone, the frolicsome
Shrill flutings of thy fellows, mad with bliss.

Bird of the swift wing, didst thou come to teach,
Ere thy departure for a sunnier shore?
Good luck go with thee! Through the open door
Regain thy freedom and thy joyous speech,
We envy thee—but human thought may soar
Beyond the utmost limit wings can reach.

August 5th, 1894. RICHARD F. TOWNDROW.

"SCUTCH."*

"SCUTCH" is our Cheshire name for *Triticum repens*, and for one or two other grasses which have the very objectionable habit (speaking from an agricultural point of view) of forming creeping underground shoots which fill the land, and are extremely difficult to get rid of, and thus cause the farmer an infinity of trouble and perplexity, expense and loss.

Triticum repens, which is an object of such dislike to the farmer, possesses, however, many points of interest; one of which centres in its English name; for it is known by the name of *scutch*, or some very similar name, throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. In this paper I propose to discuss the meaning and derivation of the name "scutch," and to trace the various changes its root-form has undergone in the dialects of different parts of the country.

The word "scutch" has a meaning in the English language. It is not one of those ordinary names which have been given to plants simply for the purpose of distinguishing them from each other. The name represents a peculiar quality or attribute, and many of those plants which possess the same attribute are called by this or some very similar name.

We shall have to go back more than a thousand years, to the

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* This paper was written for NATURE NOTES shortly before the lamented death of the author in July, 1893.—ED. N.N.

time of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, to discover the meaning and derivation of our Cheshire word "scutch," and then it will require tracing through several dialectal changes before we reach the exact form which we are accustomed to use. In the Anglo-Saxon language the word *cwic* meant alive and also lively. We have retained the word in our modern English language, quite unaltered in sound; but we now spell it *quick*, probably the better to represent the old pronunciation. Formerly *quick* simply meant alive or living, as it did in the Anglo-Saxon time; indeed, that sense of the word is not quite obsolete, although we do not often make use of it, but more frequently attach to it its other meaning, lively, which implies a certain amount of motion. But in the Book of Common Prayer we still make use of, and understand the expression, "the quick and the dead." So, hawthorn plants are, in many dialects, called "quicks," because they are alive, and a hawthorn hedge is called a "quickset hedge," because it is set with quick or living plants in contradistinction to a dead hedge, made of thorn branches stuck into the ground, of palings, or of posts and rails. But, generally speaking, we attach the meaning lively, with implied motion, to the word quick. Thus, if a person moves about, or does anything in a brisk manner, we say he is quick; and in the Cheshire dialect we speak of a drain having a "quick fall," really meaning that the water can flow along the drain in a lively manner because the drain has plenty of fall.

So much for the general meaning of the word quick, whether in Anglo-Saxon or in English. The Anglo-Saxons applied the adjective *cwic* to several plants in which they recognised any extraordinary vitality. Thus *cwic-beam* was their name for the aspen tree, because its leaves, being perpetually in motion, gave it the appearance of being alive. In later days the names quick-beam and quicken have been transferred to another tree in which the leaves are not tremulous, namely, to the mountain ash, for a reason which I shall have to mention later. In the same way the Anglo-Saxons having noticed that the roots of a certain grass, which we know by the botanical name of *Triticum repens*, and in Cheshire "scutch," possessed an amazing amount of vitality; that these roots crept along underground till they filled up the land, almost to the exclusion of every other grass; that, work how they would, it seemed almost impossible to kill it, for if ever so small a piece were left in the ground, that piece would grow and spread, in short, that the plant seemed to be vitality itself in a tangible form; they gave to this plant, *par excellence*, the name *cwice*. Accordingly this grass is still called *quick* or *quicks* in many parts of the north of England, in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Yorkshire. Hudson, in the *Flora Anglica*, speaks of it as *quick grass*, which is probably a name he had heard somewhere, though he does not say where.

The Anglo-Saxons often formed the plural of substantives by adding the letter *n* or *en* to the singular word. Cheshire men

still retain this form in their dialect, when they call bees, been; shoes, shoon; or eyes, eyen. Accordingly the Anglo-Saxon plural of *cwice* would *cwicen*; and this form also we retain as a name for *Triticum repens*, which is called *quicken* or *quickens* in the north of England, in many parts of Scotland, and in Ireland; in Worcestershire it is called *quicken grass*. But the name *cwice* has undergone many other changes in the course of a thousand years. Thus the termination has been softened from the hard sound of c to the soft sound of ch, and we get the word *cwich*, or as it is now spelt *quitch*; and this is the name given to the same grass in Glamorganshire and also to one or two other grasses which resemble it in the habit of forming underground shoots; and it is one of the names given to it by Gerard, the Cheshire herbalist, who wrote his herbal in 1597; but I think that particular form of the word is now obsolete in Cheshire, if it ever existed in that county. The name *quitch* has, in many places, been rendered less broad and rough by the pronunciation *couch* or *couch grass*, which is the name given to *Triticum repens* in both agricultural and botanical books. It likewise goes by the name of *couch* in Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Middlesex, Yorkshire, and Warwickshire. In South Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Dorsetshire and Sussex *couch* sometimes becomes *cooch*.

But besides the Anglo-Saxon *cwic* being altered in its termination to form the words I have mentioned, it has suffered even more changes in its initial letter. There is a great tendency, in many dialects, to soften the sound of cw or q into tw, and we consequently find *quitch* changed into *twitch*. This form of the word, and *twitch grass* have a remarkably wide range. They are names given to *Triticum repens*, but perhaps more especially to another creeping grass, *Agrostis vulgaris*, in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Somersetshire and Worcestershire. In some parts of Lincolnshire it is pronounced *twike*.

There is another very frequent peculiarity of local pronunciation, namely, to put an s before certain letters at the beginning of words. Thus, in Cheshire, we say sprise for prise, in the sense of forcing anything open. There is also a bird which we call spit-sparrow—that is, pit-sparrow—because it haunts the edges of pits, and generally builds its nest in the rough grass that grows round them. In this manner by the addition of the letter s, *quitch* has become *squitch* in many counties, namely, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and in parts of Ireland. And in Oxfordshire, Shropshire, the west of England generally, and in Cheshire, *squitch* is altered, shortened perhaps, into *scutch*; or our word *scutch* may have been formed from *cooch* by the addition of an initial s.

I have thus traced our Cheshire *scutch* through many curious changes from the Anglo-Saxon word *cwic*. But *cwic* has under-

gone yet another alteration. In many dialects, especially those of the north of England, the initial c has been dropped altogether, and instead of *cwic* we say *wick*. We do not know exactly how the Anglo-Saxon may have been pronounced; but as we northern English people use a great many Anglo-Saxon words, and as we still say *wick* instead of *quick*, it is by no means unlikely that that was the original Anglo-Saxon pronunciation, perhaps with a slight guttural sound, like *whick*. At any rate, in Cheshire, *wick* means alive, as *cwic* meant in Anglo-Saxon; and we speak of young thorn plants as *wicks* and *wickwood*. The various scutch grasses are called *wicks* in Cumberland, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire; in Yorkshire also *wickens*; and in Durham and parts of Cumberland they have lengthened the word as much as they could, and call it *wickenins*. The most extraordinary corruption of the word, however, appears in Scotland, in Moray and Elgin, where *Triticum repens* is called *wizards*. One cannot, I think, by any turning or twisting of the Anglo-Saxon word *cwic* convert it into *wizards*. But still, I fancy, it is not very difficult to find the connection. If *quitch* were pronounced as the Scotch do pronounce words with a guttural sound it would become *whitch*; and *wizard* is simply the masculine of witch.

Thus we see what a number of names of a grass have been formed from the one little Anglo-Saxon adjective, *cwic*. We have *quick*, *quicken*, *quitch*, *couch*, *cooch*, *twitch*, *twike*, *squitch*, *scutch*, *wicks*, *wickens*, *wickenins*, and *wizard*; and that all these names refer to the great vitality of the creeping, underground shoots of a grass, there can be no possible doubt.

I mentioned that the names *quick-beam* and *quicken* had been, by some means or other, transferred from the aspen with its tremulous leaves to the mountain ash. In Cheshire we call the mountain ash *wicken*, and it is no doubt a very old and appropriate name, but it has nothing to do with *wick*, meaning lively.

The mountain ash is the subject of much popular superstition, and it was firmly believed to be a protection against witches. The Anglo-Saxon for a witch was *wicce*, and here without doubt is the derivation of our Cheshire name *wicken*, meaning witch-tree; and as the north country word *wick* means alive, and *quick* also means alive, the names *quicken* and *quick-beam* have been transferred to the mountain ash from a misconception of the real meaning of the name *wicken* as applied to that tree, and they have thus nothing whatever to do with the Anglo-Saxon adjective *cwic*.

ROBERT HOLLAND.

BIRD SUPERSTITIONS.

THE importance attached to the habits of birds is to-day of a different kind to that given to them in past ages. The nineteenth century ornithologist pays more attention to the organs which produce the croak of a raven than to the prophetic properties of its sound. The ancient Romans, however—even when enjoying a civilization unsurpassed in many respects by modern nations—did not dare to commence any important public or private undertaking without first consulting the augurs who foretold the future from observations of the actions of birds. In this matter of fact age it would be difficult to convince some sceptical minds that the ultimate fate of the Home Rule Bill could be foretold by the initial crow of the door-keeper's rooster, yet matters of equal moment were guided in those far-off days by things quite as trivial. With our better knowledge, we smile at this ancient credulity; but the smile should not be too broad, for twenty centuries of progress have not entirely freed us from kindred superstitions. The hoot of an owl, the screech of a night-jar, are still regarded by some people as omens of evil, and the appearance of three crows (magpies in some districts) is a sure sign of disaster and death. Why three crows flying over a house should cause injury to the inhabitants is beyond the ken of science to discover, but it would take the combined eloquence of the Royal Society to disturb the faith of some believers in such bird lore.

To such an order of minds there may appear something uncanny about an owl or night-jar rushing by in the twilight on silent wings, and if its beat is near a churchyard, as often it is, the existence of the belief that the bird is an embodiment of the uneasy spirit of a departed mortal, is not difficult to understand. And, indeed, such a superstition is almost world-wide. It can be traced in nearly all parts of both hemispheres, down to the poor aborigines of Australia, who salute the native species of *Caprimulgus* as the active spirits of dead tribesmen, and even if starving would not dare to injure one of such birds. If the same preservatory effect would follow, we might well wish that a similar belief was universal in this country.

The belief that swallows hibernate during the winter still exists in some country districts, and even more common is the notion that cuckoos turn into hawks as the cold weather comes on—an error which may be attributable to the strong resemblance of the two birds when on the wing. As is well known, towards the middle of July the voice of the cuckoo begins to fail him. The first note of his familiar cry becomes hoarse, and then vanishes entirely. This is caused—so some say—by his inability to get eggs to suck, and it would doubtless surprise many skilled ornithologists to hear that cuckoos eat eggs, or that sucking eggs improves the voice of birds.

But it is superstitions of another and more hurtful kind which more particularly interest Selbornians, beliefs mostly erroneous, and which are the cause of the slaughter of thousands of useful birds. It might be thought that those who spend their lives in the fields, with the book of Nature always open before them, would at least know what animals were prejudicial to their business, and how far others were useful to them. Unfortunately, this is not always so. Prejudice and tradition too often outweigh personal experience and actual fact. You may give a gamekeeper ocular proofs that owls and kestrels rarely eat birds, and do far more, by reason of their fondness for mice and rats, to preserve game than to destroy it; yet the next time you pass his museum, you will see dangling from a nail the mangled remains of several of such birds. And the same irrational and unjust treatment is dealt out to many other feathered friends. One gardener boasted of having killed, last year, nearly two hundred blackbirds in his gardens. And for what reason? They pecked his fruit when ripe. For eleven months they were his most diligent workers, destroying an incalculable number of slugs and insects, which, without the aid of the birds the gardener could not have reached, and which, if undisturbed, would probably have destroyed the whole crop. Yet because the birds helped themselves to a little of the fruit they had helped to bring to perfection they must be maimed and killed. Truly we are a just and generous people. It does not seem to require more than an ordinary logical mind to recognise that labour must be paid for in some form, and thus the fruit the birds take may fairly be treated as wages due to them for labour done. If we admit this and then argue that they merit destruction because they devour produce which would otherwise be turned into money—the only reason for their slaughter that can be given—the same reasoning would condemn the horses that draw the plough, for they eat some of the corn they help to raise, and we have only to go a step further and think of the wages we pay, to justify a general massacre of farm labourers, which, in the language of our old friend Euclid, would be absurd.

Is it being too sanguine to say that the coming generation will be wiser and more merciful in this respect than the present? Will the increased facilities for acquiring knowledge bring about the death of such cruel errors? We must hope so, but past experience is not encouraging. Think of the amount of work done in this direction during the last decade, and still the slaughter of the innocents goes on. Many err, we are told, from ignorance or thoughtlessness. We can each do something to lessen these causes, but they cannot excuse all. Think of all the eloquent pleading that has been circulated in nearly every journal in our land, until it is almost impossible to believe that anyone can be ignorant of the cruelties of feathered trimmings, and yet "feathered women" still abound. Surely it will not always be so. A time must soon come when, recognising the grandeur and

sacredness of life wherever we see it, we shall have ornaments free from the stain of blood, sport without torture, and deem it more womanly to go unadorned, than to be decked with mutilated birds, more manly to watch an animal full of joyous life in its native haunts, than to prowl after it with a gun.

F. W. Ashley.

A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS.*

The collection of essays brought together in this handy little volume is due to an anxiety on the part of the editor to put before "the Beginner" (with a capital B) "a clue to the many paths of the somewhat bewildering labyrinth called Natural Science." The idea is excellent, and the execution on the whole satisfactory.

Books of this kind often fail from the incompetence of the writers. Lady Isabel Margesson has avoided this pitfall by enlisting the services of practised and practical hands. Mr. J. A. Thomson writes on zoology, Mr. Warde Fowler on birds, Professor Geddes on flowers, Mr. Holmes on seaweeds, Mr. Bather on fossils, and so on; while Mrs. Brightwen, Miss Edith Carrington, and Mrs. Suckling discourse respectively on Home Museums, on "Observing without Destroying," and Bands of Mercy. Sir Mount-Stuart Grant Duff's introduction is one of the pleasantest chapters in the book, though it is a little pedantic to object to Matthew Arnold's calling the Colchicum a crocus.

We are not quite sure whether it is the parent or the child whose instruction is especially aimed at, and a little consultation among the authors would have resulted in the recommendation of a more uniform series of books. Mr. Thomson advises a course of reading beginning with the *Water Babies*, and ending with Weismann's *Germ-Plasm;* he suggests a very large number of works, including some in French and German, and—"such pride is hardly wrong"—four times refers to his own *Study of Animal Life*. Clodd's *Story of Creation* might have been omitted, and there is a little too much about evolution in the chapter. Mr. Warde Fowler's little essay on birds is the best in the book, telling what and how to observe, and mentioning three or four works of reference—enough to be useful and not so many as to bewilder. There is no chapter on entomology—a curious omission. Professor Geddes is always interesting; he too has written a book and various papers, to which he refers his readers, as well as to Mr. Thomson's *Study of Animal Life*, which is a polite return to the author of that work, who commends Professor Geddes's *Chapters in Modern Botany*. Like Mr. Thomson, Professor Geddes enumerates far too many works of reference; and he should not recommend "Grant Allen's bright papers" without a caution as to their want of accuracy. It is only fair to say that he mentions the best simple and cheap books on the subject, though Mrs. Kitchener's *A Year's Botany* does not find a place; and so poor a compilation as "Thiseltons Dyer's *Folklore of Plants*" does not deserve recommendation. Oliver's "*Elementary Lessons in Botany*" should be *Lessons in Elementary Botany*, and there are other slips, such as "heiroglyphs" and "calender," which the editor should not have allowed to pass. The mosses, fungi, and seaweeds are well done, and the position of Messrs. Prior and Bather at the Natural History Museum is a guarantee for the accuracy of their contributions on minerals and fossils.

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* *A Handbook to the Study of Natural History for the use of Beginners*, with an introduction by Sir Mount-Stuart E. Grant Duff, G.C.S.I., F.R.S. Edited by the Lady Isabel Margesson. London: George Philip. 8vo, pp. xx., 232. Price 3s. 6d.

Miss Carrington alone among the writers "drops into" poetry, beginning her essay with Browning and ending it with Tennyson. She advocates observation without destruction, and carries out her principles so far as to watch a wasps' nest, "putting my face close to the hole at which a stream of wasps were [was ?] passing in and out," and this in 1893, when even the most humane persons felt that wasps were not to be encouraged! Miss Carrington instructs youth how to make artificial eggs, and thus avoid "pitiless thieving from the tiny feathered parents"; but deserted nests may be taken. Butterflies and moths "may be drawn and painted while alive," and "water creatures" may be "brought home for a time," but "should be kept out of doors." Miss Hodgson, who writes a practical paper on "Teaching Natural Science," agrees with Miss Carrington: hers is an excellent essay, full of thought and suggestion, and we regret that our space forbids us to make extracts from it. It should be read and acted upon as widely as possible.

Mrs. Suckling's "Bands of Mercy" might well have been supplemented by extracts from Lady Tennyson's paper in our February issue: it would then have been more practical than it is at present. We demur to the statement that "nothing in Nature can possibly be 'ugly' or 'horrid' or 'nasty,'" though perhaps such exaggeration is considered pardonable; Mr. Squeers's view that "Nature is a rum 'un" seems to us more accurate, although it might have been better expressed, and we feel sure that Mrs. Suckling would regard certain domestic insects as "nasty," if not "horrid," should she detect their presence in her own household. Mrs. Brightwen's "Home Museums," which originally appeared in these pages, forms a useful appendix to the volume.

We have noticed this *Handbook* at some length, although all its contents have not even now been enumerated, because we regard it as the most satisfactory attempt that has yet been made to produce a suggestive introduction to practical Natural History. In another edition the editor will probably secure a greater uniformity in treatment; it would be well, for example, if the practice followed by some of the writers of giving *at the end of their papers* a list of recommended books with prices, were adopted throughout. Perhaps, too, we may find some allusion to the Selborne Society and its magazine when another edition is forthcoming; and we may hint that a perusal of our book notices would result in some important additions to the works recommended. The *Handbook* cannot fail to prove useful and suggestive, and deserves to have a large sale.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

The latest addition to the series of "monographs on artistic subjects," which form the new issue of the *Portfolio*, is a treatise on *The New Forest*, by Mr. C. J. Cornish (Seeley & Co., 2s. 6d.). It is well written, beautifully printed, and charmingly illustrated, and should have a large sale. Among the illustrations are four etchings, which are by themselves worth more than the price of the book. Mr. Cornish's sympathies extend to the New Forest pigs: "No one," he says, "can know what an intelligent cleanly animal the pig is by nature, till he has seen him roaming half wild among the big trees, and, apparently by common consent, the leader in all the daily movements for food, shelter, water, of the mixed herd of cows, ponies, and donkeys, with which he associates."

The Country Month by Month steadily continues its course, and the instalment for August is as pleasant reading as its predecessors. Selbornians, however, will not like the account on page 39 of the raid upon "Purple Emperors." Four of these rare and beautiful insects were seen, and all "soon stretched their iridescent purple wings in the cabinet." We have more than once declined to express sympathy with those who would stop collecting altogether, but narratives of wholesale capture, such as this, afford material for justifiable censure of those who indulge their acquisitive faculties. Except as the title of a much over-rated novel, we have never met with the "yellow aster" referred to on p. 12, and,

so far as we are aware, it is not the giant bell-flower, but the Canterbury-bell, which sometimes boasts a second corolla. We should like to know more of the folklore which "tells us not to pick the scarlet pimpernel," as we were not aware the thing was reckoned among the plants under *tabu*.

"Life," some cynic observed, "would be tolerable were it not for its pleasures," and some books would be pleasant were it not for their illustrations. One of these is Mr. J. W. Tutt's *Woodside, Burnside, Hillside, and Marsh* (2s. 6d.), which Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co. have just published. The possession of a collection of blocks of very various styles, and of a by no means equal standard of excellence, is a temptation to them to overload their pages with a selection which is neither useful nor ornamental; blocks thus repeated become an absolute weariness to the eye, and prejudice the reader against the volume which contains them. Some in Mr. Tutt's book are hideous, many are unsuitable, most are unnecessary—and two at least—the "bluebell," on p. 34, which is the garden hyacinth, and the "yellow flag," on p. 197, which is *Iris germanica*—are inaccurate. The literary part of the book is pleasant enough, and the volume forms an excellent companion to the earlier work by the same author, noticed on p. 112. The observations recorded make a wider range, and there is a full index—a most desirable addition to books of this kind.

Messrs. Macmillan sends us a beautiful little book, *The Friendship of Nature*, a New England chronicle of birds and flowers, by Mabel Osgood Wright. It is a record of observations in 1893, when, there as over here, "April overslept and March jostled May;" and conveys in words a charming series of nature-pictures drawn from New England life. The writings of Miss Wilkins and others have familiarised us with the names of many of the characteristic birds and flowers of that region, and this little volume tells us more about them and their surroundings. Although hardly to be placed on a level with Mr. John Burroughs's books (which, moreover, are cheaper—is not 3s. rather a high price for the work under notice?) noticed in NATURE NOTES for 1891, p. 190. It is a dainty little collection of essays, and the Selbornian will gladly add it to his library.

SELBORNIANA.

Questions for Village Children.—Mrs. Turle sends the following questions which she has given this year to the children of her village in connection with the scheme described on p. 158:—

1. The structure of animals is always the most suitable for their habits and mode of getting their food. Mention the different parts of a cat which show this?
2. We speak of animals, birds and insects being Nature's servants. Tell me how a mole, a worm and a thrush all do good work for man?
3. What kind of birds do we call owls and hawks? Tell me something about the habits of both, and their great use to man.
4. Can you mention anything about the vulture? Is it of any use? How does it find its food?
5. What do you know about slow-worms, or blind-worms as they are sometimes called? Are they poisonous, and what peculiar thing sometimes happens if you touch one?
6. Tell me something about an earwig? What is the use of the pincers at the end of its body?
7. What do you know about a gnat? Is it of any use? Where is the first part of its life spent? Do all gnats bite?

At least four of these questions must be answered by those wishing to compete.

Scholars and Flowers.—Seeing in NATURE NOTES for December, 1893, that the Bishop of Salisbury was giving prizes to Sunday-school children for wild flowers, I thought I would try to do the same in a small way in our parish. Last year, about ten children (girls) persevered and gained prizes, the highest number

brought being 150 sorts. This year more are trying and are very much interested, looking for wild flowers on their walks to neighbouring parishes, or on occasional visits to the sea-side. One girl has already brought 170 species, and several others nearly as many. The prizes I give are filled or partly-filled stamp forms, to encourage the children to become depositors in the Post Office Savings Bank.

Walpole Vicarage, Halesworth. ANNIE TATE.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

Blackbird and Cat.—This spring, a blackbird built its nest in a tree in my garden. The young birds were hatched, and one morning a neighbour's cat was on my lawn, when the cock blackbird caught sight of it, and began making a great noise with fluttering wings, and at last got into such a passion, that it not only followed the cat closely, but flew and settled on its back; the cat was frightened and went in among some shrubs. The gardener who was looking on, tossed a pebble near the cat, when out she came, the blackbird was again furious, and again flew on its back; the cat was so much alarmed that it ran off in a different direction, which ended the excitement.

Patcham, Brighton. A. M. W.

Who Sucked the Egg?—In the garden of the Manor House, Little Shelford, Cambridge, a pair of oxeye titmice made their nest in a hollow tree, about a foot, or a foot-and-half from the ground. After the eggs were laid they were disturbed, presumably by a cat, and three eggs, more or less broken, were dragged out on the ground below, and it was supposed that the parent birds were killed or frightened away. I had been much interested from the beginning, in the building of the nest, and waited for about a month, hoping the birds might have escaped and rebuilt, but having watched for hours and seen nothing of them, I pulled out a piece of moss from the opening of the hollow place to see if the remainder of the eggs were still left, and heard a sharp hissing sound, such as these birds generally make when intruded on, and this was repeated on every subsequent attempt to examine the nest. At last, on Sunday (July 1st) after watching the spot for more than an hour, I felt convinced that the birds were no longer there; put in my hand in spite of the noise and took out an egg which was lying on the edge of the torn nest. On examination I found the egg was empty, and a tiny puncture at one side showed it had been sucked. On pushing a stick far in and moving it about, I dislodged six or eight bumble-bees, which came flying and buzzing out of the hole. They at once accounted for the noise heard, but could they be supposed guilty of puncturing the eggs which had clearly been left untouched by the first marauder?

Exmouth. MARY C. WALTON.

Lemmings.—I am very anxious to keep a tame lemming; will you kindly tell me if it would live in Ireland? and if so, what I should feed it on? Would a rabbit-hutch be suitable to keep a lemming in, or would it be necessary to keep it in the open air?

Ballintaggart, Colbinstown, Co. Kildare. MARGARET LESLIE BONHAM.

Partridge Carrying Young.—On the 25th June, when staying with my cousin at his beautiful place above the cliffs beyond Dawlish, I had been hay-making, and returning to the house by myself at 5 p.m., I passed through a small paddock where the grass had been cut four hours before, and the crop was very light. At ten yards from the gate, as I was looking to the right, two partridges got up at twelve yards' distance from me. One bird (the cock, no doubt) was slightly ahead, and I particularly noticed that the hen bird looked exceedingly roomy underneath, and as I thought travelled heavily. She had not proceeded more than seven or eight yards, and was about three feet from the ground, when she appeared to fall, striking her breast on the ground, but, immediately recover-

ing herself, she followed her mate, and both alighting in a field of standing corn, I, of course, lost sight of them. I at once returned to the hayfield, and told my brother and cousin and his men what I had seen, and asked if the partridge was not carrying her young. The men told me that there had been for some days young partridges in the paddock, but that when the parents flew away in cases like this, the youngsters would always hide away, and no one could ever find them. I then returned to the paddock, measured the above distances, and looked to see if any young birds had been dislodged by what I then thought was the mother's fall. There were none to be found, and I take it that the following explanation is the right one. When the grass was cut the parents and young ran into the hedge. At the time that I entered the paddock they were all out picking about; the hen bird called her young together as quickly as she could; before rising she told them to hold on to her, as they did, between her under feathers, with beak and feet. One little one was away, and her mother stooped in her flight and picked it up.

Clifton. GILES A. DAUBENY.

The Brown Owl.—In a quiet Buckinghamshire garden a large brown owl may be seen almost any fine evening about eight o'clock, while in the summer it is still quite light, flying silently over the house, followed by a number of little birds. This appearance of the owl is the signal for quite a chorus of alarm-notes, starlings, swallows, blackbirds, robins and sparrows immediately set up a series of shrill remonstrances, which they keep up after the noiseless fluffy "round-head" has disappeared. One evening, about 7.30, this same owl sat in the plum-tree opposite the house. It was so still that I thought I was mistaken in thinking that there was an owl there until I went under the tree. There—with grave blinking eyes, and wings drooped so close that it looked quite long and lank—sat the "pussy" owl. One step nearer, and he thought I meant mischief and silently flew over the house.

Hulcote, near Aylesbury. A. W. HARTE.

A Brave Thrush.—Within the last few days I have witnessed undaunted bravery on the part of a thrush. One day I saw it standing about three feet from my cat (which was stretched at full length on the lawn, enjoying the sunshine), keeping up a constant chatter, evidently scolding puss, who lay with her eyes shut, pretending not to see the bird; you could only tell that she knew it was there by her ears, which were put back. The bird kept his position for some time, and when he did move he still continued his scolding. The cat never offered to touch him, and I observed the bird repeat this whenever puss appeared on the lawn, and one day when she walked across the lawn this thrush positively ran after her. I saw him do it. The cause of this conduct was explained to me when I saw one day a *young* thrush come from under a wide spreading "seringa."

Carisbrooke. E. PRYCE SAYER.

Our Tame Rooks.—We are rather proud of the friendliness of our rooks in this part of Hampshire. We began our rookery with a few stray couples about twelve years ago; they built in the oak trees near the stables, but gradually came nearer to the house as they found themselves unmolested. We have been repeatedly warned that they would leave us if we did not shoot their young, but that, of course, to life-long humanitarians was impossible. So far, our numbers increase rapidly, and evidently think with us, that the more the merrier. With autumn storms our rooks desert us at night, but many of them return by day to share our bounty with the other wild birds, and come quite near to the house, often swooping down on the "bird table" (a board on a pole), and taking food therefrom on the wing. In snow time we boil whole saucepans of potatoes especially for them. Just after the rooks returned to their old nests this year we decamped with all our movable possessions to a house a mile away across country, and left the old abode in the hands of builders; especially stipulating that the rooks should not be disturbed. Whether the birds doubted the kindness of the work-people, or whether they missed their friends and spied out their retreat, it is impossible to say, but two couples followed us, built in the elms close to this house, and have each reared two nestlings. Three or four times a day

these birds, more especially one big rook, come to the window, perch on the garden chair, and caw for food. They are undismayed by the lifted window, or the action of throwing food; are very discriminating as to the merits of bacon *versus* bread; and are so noisy if unheeded that it is impossible to breakfast in peace if they are not served first. The baby rooks are just beginning shyly to join the party, and have a curious grey tinge of feathers on the head. They never steal fruit nor garden produce either here or at home, and I think we may be justly proud of our rooks.

Romsey, Hants. F. H. S.

Night-Jar (p. 159).—This bird builds *no* nest, but lays its eggs on the ground; only two eggs are laid about the beginning of June; they are quite oval, of a whitish ground with delicate veins of bluish grey and pink, and rather more than an inch in length. The note of the male bird resembles the syllable "jar-r-r-r-r-r-r," and "dec dec" when on the wing. It is one of the latest of our arrivals, seldom appearing until the middle of May and leaving in August.

Sidmouth. F. E. COOMBS.

The St. Kilda Wren.—Having just returned from the Outer Hebrides I am happy to be able to assure both Mr. Hudson and Mr. Aplin that the *St. Kilda wren* is not extinct, but that I have seen three specimens of it at least. I may also mention that I saw a pair of carrion crows this summer in the trees near Essex Villas, Kensington.

GEORGE WILLIAMSON.

Cunning Geese.—Whilst away for my holidays at a farm in Sussex, the farmer repeatedly drove the geese out of two meadows laid down for hay—sometimes using his dog for the purpose—until at last, as soon as they saw him coming—if they happened to be in either meadow—they immediately made a rapid exit. One day I was up in my bedroom and saw the geese in one of the meadows about fifty yards from the house. I was whistling an air and noticed that when I whistled loud enough for them to hear me they raised their heads and looked about to see if they could see the farmer coming. I then whistled as though calling for the dog, loud enough for them to hear me; and to see the way in which those geese scampered out of the field led me to conclude that they were "not such fools as they looked."

F. J. LANSDELL.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. H.—Yes, it is a sea-holly—*Eryngium Oliverianus.*

R. M. W.—Many thanks; it is analogous to the "Hen and Chicken" daisy.

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Leaflet.—The Prospectus of the Selborne Society has been brought up to date, and reprinted Copies may be obtained from the Secretary at the rate of 2s. per 100, post free.

Leaflet Fund.—The Committee having charge of this Fund regret that, up to the present, they have had no response to their appeal for means to carry on this important branch of the Society's work. There are several useful leaflets which require printing and circulating, but it is impossible to do this without pecuniary aid.

Winter Lectures.—The Council are anxious to obtain the names of any ladies or gentlemen willing to lecture or give addresses (in and around London, on Natural History or other subjects), on behalf of the Selborne Society, during the forthcoming Session from October to March. Further information may be obtained of the Secretary.

Selborne Water Scheme.—The Hon. Secretary of the Croydon Branch, Mr. Edward A. Martin, who has recently paid a visit to Selborne, was requested to report on the success of the Water Scheme recently inaugurated. He says: "The operation of bringing the water from the Well-head to the village has proved a brilliant success, and that, too, without marring the natural beauty of the neighbourhood. There is a constant supply from the reservoir, which is refilled about every third day by hydraulic power from the spring. The water is excellent for drinking purposes, and being obtainable by means of numerous hydrants in all parts of the village, is a great boon, especially to the old and feeble inhabitants, who are very grateful to the promoters."

Alteration in Date of Meetings.—In future the Council will meet on the first *Tuesday* in each month, instead of the first *Wednesday*, commencing October. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee (who edit this page) meet the third Wednesday in each month. The next meetings of the Council will be held on September 5 and October 2; and those of the Committee on September 19 and October 17.

Field Club Meetings.

September 8.—Twickenham Ferry (Surrey side). Meet at 2.30 p.m. for walk to Kingston by towing-path. Train from Waterloo 1.57 p.m.

September 15.—Lord Mansfield's Park, Caen Wood, Hampstead. Meet at Hampstead Heath Station 3.15 p.m. Trains leave Broad Street 2.25 and 2.55 p.m.

September 22.—"Star and Garter" Gate of Richmond Park. Meet at 2.30 p.m. for walk through Park. Train from Waterloo 1.57 p.m.

September 29.—Hale End to Woodford and Chingford. Meet at Hale End Station 3.3 p.m., Liverpool Street 2.32 p.m., Clapton 2.48 p.m. Day ticket, Liverpool Street to Chingford, 1s. Clapton to Chingford, 8d.

Branch Contributions.

	£	s.	d.
Brighton	1	2	0
Clapton	1	1	0
Kensington	2	10	0
Liphook	0	11	10
Petersfield	0	12	0
Southampton	1	0	0
Wimbledon and Putney	3	15	0

Communications for this page addressed to the Hon. Sec., Magazine and Leaflet Committee, at the Society's Offices, must be received before September 15 to appear in next issue.

Nature Notes:
The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 58. OCTOBER, 1894. Vol. V.

ROSEMARY.

'Grow for two ends, it matters not at all,
Be't for my bridal or my burial."

HERRICK.

JULY weather had brought with it all my favourite flowers. Bright marigolds, with their golden haloes of spoke-like petals—the flowers of middle summer, so dear to the heart of the cottager, which, alternately with the rose, have given their name to the most beautiful of cathedral windows—marigolds and white lilies, Canterbury bells, holly-hocks, sweet-williams, carnations, scarlet lychnis, damask roses, and lavender.

My garden is full of flowers, and yet it is not by any means large. Its principal feature is a paved walk running from one end to the other, with wide flower-beds on either side, traversed at intervals by narrow, box-bordered paths. At the further end is a high wall entirely covered with a grape-vine, and beneath this vine, with its jagged flickering leaves, is my favourite herb-bed, where many of the herbs of olden times grow in fragrant and wholesome profusion.

Great bushes of lavender stand here, like sentinels, and as they lift their countless spikes of purplish-grey flowerets, a reflection, or rather a continuation of their sweet colouring is to be found in the blossoming herbs below—in the lilac whorls of the delicately up-springing thyme, and in the deeper purple of the larger flowering sage, with its hoary stems and leaves; in the labiate blossoms of the spearmint and marjoram, and in the pale blue flowers of the rosemary—those frail blossoms, so strangely attractive, as they appear among the dark, narrow leaves of the aromatic shrub!

Pennyroyal, horehound, ground-ivy, and rue are also to be found in my herb bed, but it was the bush of dark-leaved rose-

mary that was in my thoughts on the hot July morning of which I write, and each narrow leaf with its underside of grey was invested with a strange interest and charm. A little while before I had come out into the garden, I had been reading a letter from Cintra, in which a most graphic account had been given of a Portuguese peasant's death-bed. Amongst other things it had been mentioned that, after reciting some prayers, the priest had taken a sprig of rosemary, and, dipping it in holy water, had sprinkled the room and bed of the dying man. This mention of the use of rosemary had set me thinking, and as I stood beside the herb bed I began to recall what I could of the rosemary's history, and of the old customs with which its name is associated.

Rosmarinus officinalis, the "dew of the sea" of classic ages, Ovid's *ros maris*,* winning its name perhaps from some fancied resemblance between its delicate pale blossoms and the sea-spray, or more probably from its known affection for the shores of the Mediterranean, where the traveller southwards in early spring sees large tracts of land covered with the grey-flowered bushes.

"Rosemary, flower of remembrance and of rejoicing!" I know it has been said that the rosemary owes its dedication to nothing deeper than an alliterative jingle, yet how evident it is from the records of the past, from the high esteem in which it was ever held, that something more was intended. Indeed, what better emblem of rejoicing and of remembrance could be found than this fragrant evergreen plant? It was reputed alike to strengthen the heart and memory; and perhaps these happy qualifications had something to do with the double part it was called upon to play in the drama of life. And this brings me to one of the most interesting features in the rosemary's history. Days of mourning and days of feasting belonged to it alike, and its branches were gathered alike to adorn a marriage-bed or to lay upon a newly-made grave.

Amongst the old writers reference is made again and again to these twofold characteristics of the rosemary. For example, in Rowley's "Noble Soldier" some of the people come upon the stage wearing sprigs of rosemary in their hats. They are conspiring to kill the king, and one of them says:—

> "There's but one part to play; shame has done hers,
> But execution must close up the scene,
> And for that cause these sprigs are worn by all
> Badges of marriage, now of funeral."

Again in Shakespeare, when Juliet is supposed to be dead, the Friar tells the people to take the rosemary that was to be used at her wedding and lay it on her dead body.

> "Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary
> On this fair corse; and as the custom is,
> In all her best array bear her to church;
> For though some nature bids us all lament
> Yet Nature's tears are reason's merriment."—Act iv., sc. 5.

* See Metam. xii., 410.

"Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse" repeats Capulet, and this reminds one of Dekker's touching account of the bride who died of the plague on her wedding night. "Here is a strange alteration; for the rosemary that was washed in sweet water, to get out the bridal, is now wet in tears to furnish her burial."

"For bridal or burial," wrote Herrick, in his lines on a branch of rosemary; and rosemary is evidently an important accessory of a wedding in his eyes, although in the "Epithalamium on Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady" it is marjoram and not rosemary that crowns the head of Hymen—

> "Hymen, O Hymen! tread the sacred ground,
> Show thy white feet and head with marjoram crowned!"*

But in another place Herrick speaks of the gilding of rosemary in preparation for the wedding day:†—

> "This done, we'll draw lots who shall buy
> And gild the bays and rosemary;
> What posies for our wedding rings,
> What gloves we'll give, and ribbonings."

And the gilding of the rosemary takes me back again to another old custom, the dipping of sprigs and branches in water at both weddings and funerals. At my Portuguese death-bed the rosemary was dipped in holy water, but in the old accounts it is usually scented water or "common" water that is used.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady" it is asked "Were the rosemary branches dipped?" in connection with a bridal; but in another old play reference is made to the same custom when a funeral is in question.

> "If there be
> Any so kind as to accompany
> My body to the earth, let there not want
> For entertainment. Prithee, see they have
> A sprig of rosemary dipt in common water,
> To smell at as they walk along the streets."‡

There is something very pleasant in the thought of these dripping, sweet-scented branches of the rosemary—the plant of remembrance—being carried to the grave, even as it is pleasant to think of the herb of holy rejoicing being worn at bridals; and as I looked down at my sturdy little shrub I wondered if the beautiful old custom had completely gone out of use? Sometimes the village people had come to me for bunches of rue when there was a funeral, but although I had heard that in other countries rosemary was still in demand, both for weddings and

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* Dekker's "Wonderful Year," 1608.

† According to Brand, "so late as the year 1698 the old country use appears to have been kept up of decking a bridal bed with rosemary," and the bridesmaids were accustomed to present the bridegroom with a bunch of it on the morning of the wedding.

‡ Carbright's "Ordinary."

funerals, I had never been able to authenticate these statements, or been able to discover if the rosemary branches were dipped in water as in the olden times. Bending lower over my herb-bed, I gathered a few sprigs of rosemary, and the thought passed through my mind that however completely the old traditions might have been effaced, here at least was a living exponent and historian of the joys and sorrows of the past, speaking for ever of the days that are gone, and creating a sweet bond of union between our lives and the lives of our forefathers.

"Rosemarie is for remembrance
Between us daie and night;
Wishing that I may alwaies have
You present in my sight."

With the old song running in my head, I gathered together the rosemary branches and left the sunny garden; and from my herb-bed rose up many mingled odours, both fragrant and aromatic, whilst the sunshine rested alike on the delicate grey spikes of the lavender, on the full purple flowers of the sage, and on the lowly blossoms of the thyme and marjoram.

C. H.

JANUARY IN NEW ZEALAND.

THIS, the first month of the New Year, has been wet. Instead of the dry brown grass that sheep farmers love to see at this period, the herbage is green and lush, and harbours all sorts of parasites. The summer so far has been strangely changeable, every few days of hot sultry weather ending in heavy rain.

After one of these storms of almost tropical violence fresh land-slips are nearly sure to be noticeable. Indeed, over almost the whole of the North Island these slips are quite a typical feature in the scenery. They occur especially where the ancient vegetation of bush or fern has been destroyed, and the rotting roots no longer bind the earth. Our hills, too, are chiefly formed of papa rock, with girdles of limestone cropping out regularly. Upon this papa or rock clay rests a soil of loam or peat, and where the hills are steep the slopes are scarred and gouged and seamed with slips, their tracks at first white, and later marked with the black-green luxuriance of thistles and sow-thistles. Sometimes these avalanches of earth rush through even standing lush and brush the fences away like cobwebs. Slips are a great annoyance to the shepherds, for they are most effectual traps for the sheep. In one of these mud streams discovered too late I have known as many as twenty dead sheep to be taken out; not even the sight of one of these silly animals

hopelessly struggling in clammy clay serves to deter another from the attempt to cross.

Since the occupation of land for sheep grazing an alteration of another sort is taking place in shingle country. There as the sheep pull out the loosely rooted herbage and thus destroy the chance of seeding, the shingle slips are enormously increasing.

While speaking of the hill slopes it is interesting to notice the different grades in the tracks of sheep, cattle and pigs. Sheep paths are excellently laid off, winding in among the hills at good riding slopes; cattle tracks are also good to ride on in dry ground, but unsafe to follow in wet, for they cross swamps and marshes that no horseman could get through. Pig tracks on the other hand are frightfully steep and rough, and cross ravines and gullies that no sheep would attempt.

There must be few who have not noticed how sinuous and winding are the paths—centuries old very often—through the meadows and fields in the midland grass counties of England. Here in a new land it is interesting to note how in all probability these curves first arose. The causes were originally quite trivial, for the "line of least resistance" is attractive to both men and animals. In one place a tree stump, in another a stone may have caused a deviation, nay, even a clump of weeds or a briar bush may have been sufficient. Though of course I can speak only from a limited experience of twelve years, yet the paths between the house and wool shed, or round the lake when the traffic is constant and regular, never vary. Year after year we avoid the spot where once some enormous thistle grew, or where once a dropped post in early days had caused us then to diverge. Once a curve always a curve seems to be the rule. Riding tracks, I have noticed, are considerably straighter, for a horse at speed will cut off any very sharp angles; the windings, however, are here also to be observed, and these also have been caused by the same slight original obstructions. The old native tracks through the ferns were very narrow, the Maories walking in single file, and with toes rather turned in. Very many used to live about the lake then; now, however, they only come in parties for the eels. In the small streams on the run it is only necessary to stir up the mud to procure one or two of these creatures. The dirt goes down in the current, and the eels, from former experiences imagining an unfortunate sheep to be in the water, come up for the feast. The natives have many ways of procuring these highly desired dainties. The most simple plan takes advantage of the natural desire of the eel to get out to sea. Close to us there is a big fresh-water lagoon, which after heavy rain breaks out into the ocean. When the flood has risen to nearly the top of the bank and is percolating through the sand the Maories scoop a narrow passage of four or five feet in length, running towards the sea. There two of them sit, one with a tightly tied bundle of reeds in his hand, the other ready to catch the eels. Presently one comes wriggling along the

narrow canal, hoping to swiftly reach the ocean. Down comes the bundle of reeds at the fresh-water end, thereby shutting off the stream; the water in the canal itself disappears in the sand, and the stranded eel, left high and dry, is pounced upon by the second native and secured. By this method I have seen hundreds caught in a single night. Eels travel and feed by night, the young are brought forth in tidal rivers, and afterwards again go up into the fresh-water streams.

During this month I have noticed that the young trout turned out by me in October or November have very much increased in size. At present they live amicably with a native species five or six inches long; at least, as they seem quite fearless of these larger inhabitants of the pools, I presume they are let alone. When bigger, no doubt, the trout will destroy the natives. I think I have already mentioned that the destruction of grasshoppers by starlings has spoilt the trouting in some of the southern rivers. English worms, however, are now spreading very fast. Probably they first arrived in soil of plant cases. There, left in the nursery gardens, they increased and multiplied, and with rooted specimens of trees, shrubs and flowers have been distributed through the colony. Experiments seem to prove that worms are very much more numerous in New Zealand than in England. At the same time the worms are smaller out here. During a damp month such as January they have been especially noticeable in the garden or where the grass is short and cropped.

Tutira Lake, Napier, New Zealand. H. GUTHRIE-SMITH.

MY CANARY.

SEVERAL years ago a friend of mine gave me a young canary which had been reared in a cage containing sixteen or seventeen others of a similar age. A feeling of respect for the lower animals prevents my teaching them tricks, but I delight in carefully watching the untaught habits they acquire and the characteristics they invariably display.

Dick soon began to exhibit confidence in me and pleasure in my company. At an early date I found it was safe to let him out of his cage in any room it happened to be placed in, and, generally speaking, whatever room I was likely to occupy for half-an-hour or more he was brought into, and no difficulty was experienced in getting him back into his cage. He would run about the breakfast table and help himself off my plate; and if driven away he would quickly return and repeat the offence. A glass bowl was set apart for his bath, and nothing would induce

him to use another. He would sooner abstain altogether from his accustomed wash than enter into a strange bath. Its position was of equal importance to him. It was usually placed on a mantel-piece close to a gilded glass in which he could see himself. As his splashings injured the gilding, I removed his bath to another place, but then he would not use it. I replaced the bath in its customary position, and endeavoured to protect the gilding by placing some paper against it. This did not please him, and he pulled away the paper with his beak before he would bathe. He watched with great interest my arrangement of flowers, and when he could carry off small ones he would fly to the window-sill with one at a time, and place them in parallel lines. When I wished him to go into his cage he readily obeyed me, but when I told my maid to put him in he would wait until she held the cage within a few inches of him and then he flew away, generally to a picture-frame. There he stayed until the cage was again held near to him, and then he quietly went off again a short distance, repeating these tactics until my maid's outstretched arms were tired with holding the cage. When my amusement was satisfied I took the cage and called him, and he at once obediently went in.

My practice was to have his cage placed on a small table near my bed. When I awoke a pair of black beads were always watching me, and his yellow beak was thrust between the wires. I then opened the cage door, when he began to amuse himself by getting into some mischief. One morning after letting him out I feigned sleep, but kept my eyes sufficiently open to watch his proceedings. He got on to my bed and began singing. As this apparently did not awaken me he ran up my arm, and perching himself on my shoulder he began to pull stray hairs that were about my ears. As this did not seem to awaken me, he began to sing so loudly close to my ears as almost to deafen me. Later on he would follow me downstairs, flying into whatever room I entered. On more than one occasion when I had dined out I was told on my return that Dick looked very ill, and that he had been lying on his back in the cage, with his legs stretched upwards, seemingly almost at his last gasp. When I went to him saying, "My poor little Dickie, what is the matter with you?" he jumped up chirping and fluttering about the cage as well as possible.

One evening a lady had been dining with me, to whose cap Dick took an intense dislike. The cap was left in my room after her departure, and in the morning, on hearing some curious little twitterings and sounds of anger, I felt sure that Dick was in mischief. And so he was. He had got hold of the cap firmly in his claws, and was literally pulling it to pieces with his beak, drawing out the threads one by one.

Amongst other traits of character he certainly possessed a real sense of humour. One day having left him at large in a room, where I was arranging flowers, on my return instead of

welcoming me as usual by flying round me twittering, he was not to be seen. I called in vain, but the ordinary response did not come, searching every part of the room unsuccessfully, when to my dismay I found the window had been left open, and I at once concluded that he had flown away. Much distressed I was on the point of going out of doors to endeavour to find him, when happening to stoop down I caught sight of something yellow under the seat of a chair, and on going to examine it I found Dick hanging *like a bat* underneath. Directly he saw that I had found him, he flew round and round the room twittering with the utmost glee.

On another day an almost exact repetition of the same scene took place, and after looking in vain everywhere, including his former hiding place, I concluded that this time he had really gone out of the window. I was leaving the room when a yellow streak, very slightly projecting behind the heavy window curtain, arrested my attention. Feeling sure that it was Dick, instead of going directly to him I went to the other end of the room, calling him repeatedly by name. There was no reply. After I thought the time had lasted long enough I went and gently pulled back the curtain exposing him to view. When he found that he was discovered he flew round the room twittering in his usual manner. It was to all intents and purposes a game of hide and seek.

I finally lost him by a painful accident. Left in a room by himself, he had evidently lost a grain of hempseed which had fallen into a narrow vase. Perched on the rim and endeavouring to stretch his neck down to it he had overbalanced himself and fallen head first down, the narrowness of the vase pinioning his wings to his side. He was, of course, soon suffocated.

H.

AUTUMN BERRIES.

When the autumn woods are leafless, and the red sun shines
through mist,
When we mourn the death of blossoms that warm zephyrs
lately kissed,
Then it is that hedgerow berries in their brightest colours glow,
Berries which must feed the wild birds through the time of frost
and snow.

Scarlet hips on graceful branches, crimson haws on thorny trees,
With a host of other berries, bright and beautiful as these,
Deck the country lanes and copses, and make fair each wooded
glen,
Every bush a God-given storehouse for the robin and the wren!

Every bush a winter storehouse for the wild birds great and small,
From the thrushes and the blackbirds to the tiniest wren of all.
Patient birds that cheer the snow time with their beauty and their song!
Strange it is that human creatures have the heart to do them wrong.

Yet the plundering hands are busy, busy all the sweet spring days,
Gathering bloom from hawthorn hedges, by the quiet country ways;
Then, in June, of pinky blossoms many a wild rose tree they strip,
And in autumn seize the berries, crimson haw and scarlet hip.

Careless ones that spoil the hedgerows, listen to a warning word:
Of its winter food, believe me, you are robbing many a bird;
And perchance the very song birds that, beneath a summer sky,
Gave you pleasure with their warbling, by your thoughtlessness will die.

ELIZABETH W. WOOD.

Chesham, Bury, Lancashire.

A TALK ABOUT BIRDS.*

MUCH has been written about the wanton destruction of beautiful and useful birds for the purpose of adorning ladies' hats and bonnets. No one can lament this destruction more than I do, but instead of reproaching the wearers of such bird-bedecked head-gear, I think it behoves us to try and spread definite information on the subject. I believe thousands of ladies make their purchases at the milliner's in ignorance of the cruelty which is exercised in order to furnish the supply of birds for bonnet trimmings.

The small snow-white heron, which has, during the nesting time, a plume of lovely feathers growing out of its back, is ruthlessly killed whilst it has its young ones, as the feathers are then in the greatest perfection. Dozens—nay, hundreds—of men are employed in slaughtering the parent birds as they hover over their nests, for their maternal love is so strong that they cannot bear to fly away and leave their young broods. Not only are they killed by hundreds, but they are also tortured by having their wings torn off whilst still alive. Many are only wounded by the shots and fly away to die slowly, hearing the cries of their offspring, perishing miserably of hunger.

Whenever I see the so-called "aigrette" or osprey (which are the milliner's names for the feathers of the egret or white heron) in a lady's bonnet, I long to tell her how my heart aches for the sorrows of the little mother bird who died

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* The Society for the Protection of Birds has just issued this excellent "Talk about Birds" as a leaflet, at 1½d. per dozen, or 1s. per 100, post free. We cannot better commend it than by reprinting it here, with a strong recommendation to our readers to obtain copies for distribution from the Hon. Secretary of the Society, whose address is given in the leaflet.—ED. *N.N.*

this agonising death to minister to her vanity. I believe that hundreds of kind-hearted ladies would agree never to wear an aigrette plume again, did they but know how it is obtained.

Another sorrowful fact is that swallows, our graceful summer visitors, are becoming noticeably less in number every year, and the reason is not far to seek. Telegraph wires, with strong batteries attached to them, are erected in many places on the French coast, and as the poor swallows arrive, tired and worn from their long flight across the sea, they alight upon the wires to rest. A powerful electric shock is their cruel welcome, and down they fall in thousands, to be sent to the 10,000 workpeople employed in Paris in preparing bird skins for the English market.

I cannot but think that if these and endless other cruelties were widely made known, surely true-hearted English ladies would resolve never again to buy a hat or bonnet adorned with small birds' wings or aigrettes. There is no cruelty in wearing ostrich feathers if they are carefully cut at the proper season, and the quill ends left in the wing until the new feathers are formed, when the dead quill may be taken out without pain to the bird.

The game birds used for food furnish a wide range of coloured plumes to suit almost every shade that may be required, so that there is really no excuse for exterminating some of the loveliest of God's handiworks in this wanton manner.

I must touch upon one other aspect of this question. Last summer, in two forests in France, fifteen thousand nightingales, flycatchers, and other insect-eating birds were captured by the electric wire arrangements to supply the demands of fashion. When the balance of Nature is thus interfered with, farmers and gardeners must expect to pay a heavy penalty in seeing swarms of insects devouring their crops, unchecked by the thousands of innocent and useful birds which were created to keep them under.

When milliners find their customers constantly refusing to purchase bird-trimmed hats, the fashion will soon die out. Our kind-hearted Queen and the princesses have declared themselves against this cruel custom, and it only needs a determined effort on the part of the leaders of fashion to put an end to it altogether. I will conclude by mentioning the Society for the Protection of Birds, and urging all ladies to belong to it. All that is needful is to send name and address with two penny stamps to Mrs. Lemon, Hon. Sec., Hillcrest, Redhill, when a card of membership with rules will be forwarded. An annual subscription of one shilling makes the donor an associate of the Society and entitled to receive the annual report and notice of all general meetings.

ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.

THE GROUSE.*

THE design of the "Fur and Feather Series" is to present monographs on the English birds and beasts which are generally included under the head of game. That on the partridge has already been noticed in these columns, and we have now a delightful volume devoted to that peculiarly British bird the red grouse. The grouse is perhaps economically the most important bird in the British Islands. The wonderful journey north, of which Mr. Stuart-Wortley pens such a realistic description in "The Scotch Mail" is, as he points out, "only one of the many combinations which English brains and love of sport have rendered not only possible, but usual. . . . . Exactly sixteen hours from the time you were driving through Bloomsbury you have killed a right and left of Perthshire grouse, on a spot which fifty years ago would have taken eight days to reach." And further, he calls our attention to the facts that

* *The Grouse.* Natural History by the Rev. H. A. Macpherson; Shooting by A. J. Stuart-Wortley; Cookery by George Saintsbury; pp. vi., 293; vignette, 12 plates, and various diagrams. Longmans, Green & Co., 1894. Price 5s.

grouse have influence over politics, as we are constantly reminded; over trade and railway enterprise; and last, but not least, over the well-being and prosperity of a large proportion of our population. As Mr. Macpherson remarks, Scotland owes a very large proportion of her material prosperity to the fact that it is the home of this splendid bird.

In the first seventy-nine pages Mr. H. A. Macpherson deals with the natural history of the Grouse in five chapters; viz., "In Praise of the Grouse;" "The Manners of the Grouse;" "The Grouse and its Enemies;" "The Plumage of the Grouse;" and "Grouse-Becking;" and the "southron" reader will appreciate this part of the book the more insomuch as it is the work of a "Highland laird."

In an interesting dissertation on the bird's names—Celtic and English—our author points out that "grouse" is not an English word at all, but was borrowed (apparently from an old French adjective "grièsche" signifying *grey* or *speckled*), and used first as a plural, "grice." It was modified into "grows," and Professor Newton has shown that this was originally applied to the blackcock, as long ago as 1531 indeed. The red grouse was originally the "moor-fowl," "moor-game," "moor-cock" or "muir-fowl," and still preserves these titles in some localities. We may supplement this information by adding now that although in an Act of Parliament passed in the second year of James I., we find "grouse" alongside heath-cock and moregame, showing that the first name still signified blackgame, yet by 1692, as is proved by a section of an Act (4 and 5 Will. and Mary, Cap. 23), regulating the burning of heather for the better preserving of "the red and black game of grouse, commonly called heath-cocks or heath-polts," the name seems to have been applied to both species.

The distribution of the grouse in Scotland, some of the Orkneys, Hebrides (there are none in the Shetlands), England down to Derbyshire, suitable places in Wales and in Ireland, is sketched, and the possibility of its successful introduction and establishment elsewhere discussed. A chapter on food, breeding and general habits at large and in captivity follows, and many readers of NATURE NOTES will peruse with pleasure the accounts of tame and bold domesticated grouse, one of which actually used to accompany the guns. The extent to which the grouse is migratory seems very uncertain. Birds have been known to fly from Hoy to Pomona across a channel quite four miles wide; they have been seen flying across the Moray Firth, and in the severe weather of January, 1886, great packs of grouse used to fly from the moors, more than three miles off, down the valley, over the town of Masham, to feed on the cultivated land and the hedge berries. Another chapter is devoted to the judicious treatment and burning of the heather to ensure a good food supply, so necessary to the health of the birds, and to the question of vermin. It is well to know what constitutes the food of "vermin," especially of birds of prey, and to know whether they are grouse-ivorous or not. We are inclined to think that we should always bear in mind the temptations to a particular line of diet which is set before a bird of prey when any species of bird or animal desirable for food is provided upon certain ground in excessive and unnatural abundance. Witness the birds and beasts which have taken to feeding largely on *Arvicola agrestis* during the late and other vole plagues. From the point of view of the birds of prey a chronic grouse-plague exists on many English and Scotch moors! We are glad Mr. Macpherson can almost, if not quite, acquit the merlin and the kestrel, and are not at all surprised to find that those arch-villains the hooded and carrion crows are the worst foes of the grouse. A chapter on the plumage and hybridism of the grouse, followed by an account of the "dubious" pastime of "becking" grouse or calling them to the gun, and of some undoubted poaching practices, brings to a close this part of the volume, which we heartily hope will be read carefully in its entirety by all who want reliable information.

The bulk of the volume is, as before, devoted to shooting. But every field naturalist should read Mr. Stuart-Wortley's masterly treatises on shooting over dogs, Scotch and English "driving," and ground stock and poaching, not only for the sake of his fresh and healthy sketches of moorland scenery and sounds, but because (as no one can become a good and successful sportsman without long and careful study of the habits of the game he follows) he will learn much therein of the ways and manners of the grouse. Many a field naturalist, and

lowlander fond of his gun (whether he can go in spirit, or only longs to go, with the author to the ptarmigan heights), will read with sympathetic interest of that delightful mixed shooting to be enjoyed on "the fringe of the moor." And the chapter on records and remarks shows us what healthy preserving will do for the numbers of one individual species despite hard legitimate shooting. For a sportsman to kill 1,036 grouse to his own gun in one day is perhaps an artificial test, but we can arrive at only one conclusion from the fact of a moor of under 12,000 acres yielding for seven years an average of 6,000 birds a year, notwithstanding that this period included two very bad seasons, viz., 1891, when only 1,826 birds were killed, and 1892, when there was no shooting.

Mr. Saintsbury teaches us to put this enormous food supply to the best advantage, and writes as usual a charming and instructive, as well as an amusing essay.

The very beautiful plates drawn by Mr. A Thorburn, under the supervision of the sportsman-author, would of themselves make the book a treasure to naturalist and sportsman alike. While all are pleasing, the three plates of ptarmigan and ptarmigan scenery, perhaps, please us most — though "The Shadow of Death" may look fanciful, "Old Grouse on Tops" is a beautiful picture, and in "On the Wall," we have a clever pourtrayal of a cold wintry scene.

O. V. APLIN.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS.

We are delighted to see that Mrs. Brightwen's *More about Wild Nature*, which we noticed at length in NATURE NOTES for 1893 (p. 14), has passed into a shilling issue. Both author and publisher are to be thanked for this boon, but we confess that we shall not be satisfied until the earlier volume is again accessible at the same price. There is no need for further commendation of a book which already finds a place on the shelves of most Selbornians, and which will assuredly attain greater popularity now that it is accessible at a price which brings it within range of the most limited purse.

Walton and some Earlier Writers on Fish and Fishing, by R. B. Marston, pp. xxv., 264. 8vo. (Elliot Stock, 1894. Price 5s.) Few more delightful works than the present could be found for those whose bookish tastes lie in the direction of our sporting literature of former days — those "Country Contentments," written chiefly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which have in them the power to charm so many of us, whether we be anglers, gunners or field naturalists. And though this is more especially a book about fishing-books, yet it is pre-eminently one for those who, like Dr. Prime (p. 54), "find far more in fishing than mere fishing." In it we can pick up wrinkles as to how St. Patrick rid Ireland of snakes, and how to catch the hern and the otter or "water wolfe," and learn something about the poult (or burbot), of the breeding of crevis (or crayfish), and a new orchard and garden, including the husbandry of bees. The book well fulfils its object of making Walton and a few earlier writers known to some to whom they are only names. Those, too, who know their Walton well will find some interesting facts in the sketch of his life and times. We are introduced also to the celebrated "*Treatyse*" of Dame Juliana Berners, to Barker's *Delight*, and to the works of Leonard Mascall and Gervase Markham, &c. We are told something about the principal editions of Walton's *Complete Angler*, and are warned how not to buy a spurious "early" edition, made, like so much more worthless trash, in Germany. A perfect first edition sells at from £200 to £300, but as Mr. Marston remarks sadly, "All good Waltons go to America."

O. V. A.

The younger Mr. Weller's knowledge of London was "extensive and peculiar," and as regards the environs we find in Mr. Walker Miles an expert whose acquaintance with foot-paths appears quite unapproachable. By what extraordinary faculty it is that he manages to discover the many curious and little-used by-ways which he has described it passes our comprehension to determine.

Enough for us that we have the pleasure of following out the skilfully contrived *Field-Path Rambles* (R. E. Taylor & Son, 19, Old Street, E.C.), which he has placed before the public. Attention has frequently been called in these pages to the series, so well suited to the needs of Selbornians and all lovers of the country. Armed with any of Mr. Miles's little books, one may ramble all day through an absolutely new district without passing a soul, and yet never make a mistake in the choice of footpaths, so clearly worded are Mr. Miles's directions. On the present occasion we have to mention series six and seven, the latter of which treats of Reigate and its vicinity, and is of the usual price—6d. ; while the former —a double number with a route map—costs 1s., and covers 100 miles of walking round Leith Hill and Dorking. It is unnecessary to remind our readers that the finest scenery in the South of England lies about Leith Hill ; but we can assure them that Mr. Miles thoroughly appreciates it, and well knows how to guide his disciples to the best points of view. Personally, we thought we knew the way from Dorking to Leith Hill well enough ; but under Mr. Miles's direction we have been taught humility and four new routes, one of which led us by a short but varied way by Bury Hill, across Logmore Lane, and by a gradual ascent up Wotton Common, and all of a sudden placed us within a few feet of the summit of the hill in full view of the glorious panorama it commands. Mr. Miles always gives full notice as to what paths must be avoided in wet weather and how to avoid them, thus rendering the pursuit of his rambles possible during the winter season. A. G.

"The Coming of Autumn" fitly opens the September issue of *The Country Month by Month*, and, like the rest of the volume, is pleasant reading. Prof. Boulger quotes a quaint passage from Forster about the marigold, but hardly makes it sufficiently clear that the supposed commemoration in its name of the Blessed Virgin is purely imaginary. The flowers are coming to an end, but the bird-life is as active as ever, and finds, as usual, a sympathetic recorder in Mrs. Owen. We notice that the Society for the Protection of Birds receives friendly notice in this instalment, which induces us to hope that the Selborne Society may presently receive a word of encouragement.

SELBORNIANA.

Imitating Autumn Leaves.—For many years I have endeavoured to preserve the exquisite tints of autumn leaves with but partial success. I have now, however, devised a plan by which their fleeting colours are so successfully imitated that my friends constantly take the painted leaf for the real one. As it may give pleasurable occupation to some of our younger members, I will briefly describe the process.

The materials required are but few : a common slate, some fine drawing paper, a cyclostyle* roller, and a bottle of the ink which is sold with it. A small quantity of the ink should be placed on the slate, and the roller passed to and fro until it is slightly and evenly inked. The leaf should then be placed on a flat hard surface, and the roller passed firmly over so as to leave a little ink on the under side of the leaf to mark the veins. The leaf should then be reversed, with the ink side downwards, on a piece of drawing paper, and the roller firmly passed over it once only. The result will be an exquisite faint imprint of the exact shape of the leaf with all its veins. After a few minutes it will be fit to be painted in water colours, so as to exactly resemble the various tints in the real leaf. The colours should be very moist, and rather floated into each other, as in this way one can most readily attain the delicate gradations of tone. When finished the leaf should be neatly cut out with fine scissors, carefully retaining the notches at the edge, which vary so much in different trees, and give character to each species. When such painted leaves are gummed into a blank book the effect will be found to be won-

* This kind of roller and the ink can be obtained at any stores.

derfully real. The album should be large enough to allow of four or five leaves, each representing a different stage in the colouration—yellow, pink, crimson, and all other tints which belong to each special tree. A page should of course be reserved for each set of specimens, and the English and Latin name, the date, and any other particulars written at the bottom of the page will add to the scientific value of the collection. ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.

Children's Country Holidays Fund.—A correspondent demurs to our appeal (p. 157) on behalf of this excellent Society, on the ground that "however interesting it may be to those it concerns," it "has no place in natural history records." We have never understood that the scope of NATURE NOTES was limited to "natural history records," and our preliminary prospectus suggested no such limitation. One of our aims is to encourage and develop a love of Nature, and we can imagine no more suitable way of doing this than by enabling the children of the town to learn something of the sights and sounds of the country. We know from experience that the Children's Country Holiday Fund largely contributes to this desirable result, and of this some evidence will be found in NATURE NOTES for 1892, p. 123. It is to be regretted that subscriptions have this year fallen short of what is required. There is even yet time to secure a country holiday for some child who has not had one, and this can be done by sending 10s. to the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, at 10, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.

"Nature Notes" due North—and Elsewhere.—Mr. W. J. C. Miller writes:—"I am sure all members that I have ever spoken to would much wish, with me, that the admirable NATURE NOTES could be extended to twenty-four or more pages. This morning I had a long and interesting account from Sir Dyce Duckworth of his voyage beyond Spitzbergen, up to nearly 81° *north latitude!* Among other things, he told me that they had an eminent naturalist on board; that he read your magazine with much interest, as did also several others of Sir Dyce's fellow voyagers; and that they had all around them hosts of birds, whereof I had seen a few on the Devonian Headland.

"They steamed, in their large vessel, far beyond Spitzbergen, till they came to the pack-ice, at 80° 30′ North, amid spouting whales, and full sunshine that never set, and sea birds and seals, and hosts of other things that I should like to see. I gathered that your magazine was largely read, and I gave Sir Dyce nearly all the numbers that I had, including August. You should surely get to at least twenty-four pages. Every one that speaks to me of the Magazine, or writes to me, or writes of it in out-of-the-way newspapers and such like things, says how much they enjoy all that it contains."

"Dead Trees and 'Nature Notes.'"—Under this heading we find the following paragraph in *London* for September 13:—"St. George the Martyr. Mr. Thornton referred at the vestry meeting to the remarks in NATURE NOTES of the neglect of the trees in the roadways of the parish. He asked whether anything was being done to protect the trees. Mr. Brown said several of the trees along the road were dead, and he thought a man should be specially employed to look after all the trees in the parish; it seemed impossible to get them well looked after under the contract system. The clerk, Mr. Millar, observed that the subject was being considered in committee, and would be dealt with in a special report."

We shall esteem ourselves fortunate if we have succeeded in arousing the sleeping consciences of the St. George's vestrymen, and shall await with interest the report of the committee. But, as we pointed out on p. 142, the "tree committee" has so far done absolutely nothing except to neglect the duties imposed upon it, and no "report" can possibly be more conclusive than that which was submitted to them four or five years since by an expert. As to employing "a special man," that is a matter which the ratepayers should look into. The existing contract with the nurseryman who supplies the trees distinctly provides for their being kept in order by him, and it surely rests with the vestry, through their surveyor, to see that the agreement is carried out. Meanwhile, the tree-guards are being newly painted, which will at any rate draw public attention to the broom-sticks and dying trees which so many of them protect.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

A Friendly Drake.—The illustration on page 130 of "Rosie and the Drake," makes me wish to send an account of a drake with whom I am personally acquainted, as a constant fund of amusement, at my son's living in Devonshire. This drake will come from any distance within hearing across a grass field, where he is usually with a company of ducks, if he catches sound of anyone passing in the road; he waddles along at topmost speed and often succeeds in reaching the passer-by, whom he rubs and quacks, at the risk of throwing the person down, or being injured himself. This has been going on for above a year, unless the would-be companion is dead and roasted quite recently. Happily, the road is little frequented. S. J. S.

Nightjars (p. 159).—In June last year we were spending a fortnight on the bracken-covered Crockham Hill, near Oxted, and on one of our rambles we were startled to see a nightjar rise from the ground just in front of us, leaving an egg exposed. We had before heard the singular monotonous "jarring" cry of the bird at night, and on returning next day to look again for the strange creature, after a long search we discovered what would be called its nest, in reality, however, nothing but the bare, hard ground, without the least approach to padding or covering, on which two eggs, of about the size of a pigeon's egg, white with bluish-grey and brown blotches or mottles, were deposited. The bird, when sitting, was so exactly like a fallen log or piece of dead bracken in appearance,—it *lies* full length on its eggs—that we could never have been sure of finding it again had we not stuck a branch into the ground to mark the spot. With the aid of this landmark, we frequently approached unnoticed, and saw the bird ever in the same curious attitude, and at last we were fortunate enough to see first one, and the last evening of our stay, the second young nightjar hatched. They were helpless little balls of yellow-brown fluff, cuddled against each other on the hard ground. This last evening we also heard the other weird cry of the nightjar, something like a long-drawn "wheep," as he was seen sweeping past on noiseless wings, we fancied after prey. This call was widely different to the often heard monotonous jar. We brought the broken egg-shells home with us, and if your correspondent some day cares to come and see them, we shall be pleased to show them to him. The nightjar *we* saw sitting appeared always the same, and we fancied it to be the mother bird. She was found in that entirely unprotected spot in the blazing noonday sun and in the dew of evening.

South Beddington, Wallington, Surrey. M. COUPLAND.

Cuckoo and Hedge-Sparrow.—I found a hedge-sparrow's nest on the 26th May, in which were five eggs, and as I was passing on I noticed a cuckoo perched on the fence opposite. Expecting to see something interesting, I went to a little distance and watched. The cuckoo made a short flight and returned, alighting on the top of the hedge just over the nest. It then disappeared over the other side, and soon, to my delight, flew back over the hedge with a hedge-sparrow's egg in its beak, seated itself on the road, and tried to get the egg further into its throat. Finding it could not effect its purpose with its beak in a horizontal position, it threw its head back in a perpendicular attitude and swallowed the egg whole. The cuckoo then caught sight of me again, and rose into the air, making a circle or two round the spot, and lodged in an elm tree overhead. I went over and examined the nest, and verified the fact that one egg was missing, and on seeing me go over to the nest the cuckoo flew off and did not return. I took one egg, thinking the cuckoo wished to make room for its own egg, which I hoped I might see deposited, and especially I desired to see a solution of the point contested by ornithologists, *i.e.*, as to the *manner* of doing it, whether with the beak or claw. But after waiting some time, I gave up watching for the bird's return. The three remaining hedge-sparrow's eggs have since been hatched into as many healthy fledglings. J. C. ROBERTSON.

Keston.

Trout Fighting.—When living in Hampshire a few years ago I had special opportunities of watching the habits of trout. At the bottom of my lawn was a

small moat, about thirty-five yards long by five wide, with grating at each end to confine the fish, and fed by a spring that rose a hundred yards off. The water was generally as clear as possible, but during rain it was not so; and as it passed through a water-cress bed before entering my garden, and also through a second smaller bed that I cultivated close to the moat, an unusual amount of insect food, in the shape of caddis of all kinds which live on the water-cress, was close at hand. Indeed, I attribute the large size and fine condition of my fish, confined as they were in a comparatively small tract of water, to this simple way of feeding them. My trout became, to some extent, tame, and had no objection to my presence, and they used to look out for worms, &c., that I often threw to them. I stocked my moat with small trout which in a few years grew to a large size; one scaled almost 6 lbs., and none were under a pound weight. They often used to fight, and their fighting was as fierce as that of bull dogs. Often have I gone to the side of the moat when I saw that a battle was going on, and have stood for half an hour or so, close to a couple of big fellows, and seen the whole affair as plainly as if it occurred in the middle of my dining room. The evidences of a fight can be detected at once. It always takes place on the surface of the pool. The back fin of the fish is erected and stands straight out of the water, as well as part of the tail. The combatants swim slowly round each other, almost invariably side by side, sometimes as far as two yards apart, with their heads in opposite directions, like two ships seeking to ram. Then one suddenly turns and rushes at the other, endeavouring to seize him just above the tail. If he succeeds in thus gripping him he shakes him with all his might, and holds on for some considerable time, driving him broadside through the water. Why these fights occur I cannot say for certain; they generally take place in the summer, and thus some time before the spawning season. It may be that some favourite part of the water, or the mastery of the pool is the *teterrima causa belli;* or perhaps even in the summer arrangements are made for the coming breeding season. The fight usually ends by one of the combatants acknowledging that he is beaten; they then swim quietly away. The combats that I have witnessed have been between fish of about equal size. EDMUND THOS. DAUBENY.

Market Weston, Thetford, Norfolk.

Flycatcher Query.—A flycatcher has a nest under a window in the rose tree, and did not mind anyone looking at it or being near it. Four eggs were laid, and then one hatched (the other eggs disappeared). Three days after the little one also vanished. Did they take it away? No cat or anything could get at the nest, as the window was shut all day.

Martins Heron, Bracknell, Berks. B.

Communities of Pigs.—I read in an old number of the *Saturday Review* (I think) that when droves of pigs were turned out into the feeding grounds in Sicily, they formed communities and seemed to have some social system. I cannot now find the reference. Can anyone tell me what the evidence for this is, or mention any books on natural history, or Sicilian stock-keeping, that would be likely to deal with the question?

Boreham, Warminster. JOHN U. POWELL.

Field Names.—In the Norfolk parish in which I was brought up, almost every field has a name, many of them, no doubt, of great antiquity and interest; others modern and merely distinctive, and chiefly in regard to their size, or some other physical peculiarity. In the parish alluded to we have plenty of fields and meadows, but no close, leaze, tyning, harton, or hayes. But we have "The Plains," "The Mashes" (*i.e.*, marshes), "The Pamments" (? pavements), "The Bleach," "The Black Breck," "Lammas Meadow," "The Hospital Meadows" (though I never could discover any traces of a former hospital or old monastery here), a field called "Hills and Holes," "The Beggar's Bush Field," and many others. Large fields in Norfolk are plentiful. My great grandfather took a farm on the Raynham estate, of which one field was 500 acres! In this county, Stafford, however, we find many "Leasowes" (which may be identical with the leaze mentioned by Canon Ellacombe in NATURE NOTES for 1893, p. 164), while Barton and Hayes are met with as the names of villages. So is

"Barton" as the name of a place in Norfolk. I should be very glad to hear if any of your readers can kindly tell me of a common small field name found in North Cheshire, and in the bordering county of Flint, beginning with a letter "Q." I used to hear the word twenty years ago when staying in that district, but it has quite slipped my memory.

Tipton, Staffordshire. ED. A. SPURGIN.

Insects and Plant Fertilisation.—It seems to me that careful observations upon the visits of insects, and especially of bees and moths, to flowers, might form a useful and interesting occupation for those Selbornians who have leisure hours; whilst the result of these observations would add to the interest of NATURE NOTES. My observations, which (owing to lack of leisure) have been only partial and fragmentary, seem to point to the conclusion that bees are largely influenced in their selection of plants for visiting by their sense of smell. I have on several occasions noticed bees choose such inconspicuous and sober coloured flowers as those of wood sage (*Teucrium Scorodonia*) in preference to the gaily coloured flowers which were growing around. Last year, during a visit to Lakeland, I watched for about two hours the movements of bees among a group of wild flowers consisting of harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), wood betony (*Stachys Betonica*), golden rod (*Solidago Virgaurea*), and wood sage. The very large majority of these bees (quite three out of four) took no notice of the gaily decked plants, but alighted on the flowers of the wood sage, and seemed to be extracting nectar from them. The bees which visited other plants first, soon left them for the wood sage. As the observations of botanists have shown that blue, yellow, and red are favourite colours with bees, the only conclusion I could draw from my observations on this occasion was that these Westmorland bees were guided by scent rather than by sight in their choice of this inconspicuous flower, and that the nectaries of the wood sage at the time were secreting nectar. I think it has been pretty clearly proved that the period of the most copious secretion of nectar coincides with the maturity of the anthers or of the stigma. The wood sage flowers in question, or, more correctly, a large number of them, had all the appearances of maturity. Observations made by me during the month of August last in North Devon tended to confirm the view above stated. I mention my observations with a view of inviting attention in an indicated direction, and of asking others to assist in collecting such a body of facts as may lead to the forming of a correct opinion. I am fully aware that my few and imperfect observations are totally inadequate for the formation of a decided opinion, and I only ask that they may be taken for what they are worth —not much.

Bath. W. G. WHEATCROFT.

Insects and Colour.—How much insects are attracted by colour was vividly inpressed upon me on the evening of June 19, when I noticed the rare humming-bird hawk-moth visiting the geranium flowers, darting with lightning speed from blossom to blossom, and inserting its proboscis into the nectaries, as is its habit while still on the wing. I called my wife, who was at the time wearing a black dress with heliotrope ruching at the edge of the skirt, to see the pretty creature. Immediately upon catching sight of the heliotrope trimming it left the geraniums and time after time inserted its prohoscis into the folds of the ruching, and only after frequent attempts and a failure to find nectar, it desisted.

J. H.

A Tame Tortoise.—We kept a tortoise in our garden in an enclosed space on the lawn for many years. It was provided with a little wooden house lined with hay where it would retire for the night. It used to eat lettuce, dandelions and hawksweed, but what it delighted in most of all were buttercups, which we put before it in heaps and which it greedily devoured. It used also to eat bread cut up in small pieces, preferring the crust, we thought, and it would swallow small stones sometimes. It was very lively, and when we let it out for a run it was astonishing to see the pace at which it would go; it generally made for the borders, where it sometimes got lost amongst the shrubs and flowers, and once it was found in the road some distance away outside the grounds. Sometimes, if frightened, it would hiss like a serpent, and draw its head very quickly into its

shell, but it was quite tame and seemed to like us to rub its head. A saucer of water was provided for it. It slept through the winter in its bed in the greenhouse. M. C. W.

Cats and Squirrels (p. 217).—I was living some years ago about a mile from Hackwood Park, in Hampshire, where squirrels were numerous. We had a young female cat, who one day showed signs of great terror, racing about the garden; we went out to see what frightened her, and saw a squirrel on a branch of a large tree. For two or three days the cat was most uneasy, but we felt sure she killed the squirrel, although afraid of him at first, for we found him dead on the grass. M. A. M.

Jackdaws.—On about August 22, I was surprised to observe jackdaws at Hampstead fairly high in the air, hawking insects. In a dry summer when ground insects and grubs are scarce, it would not perhaps be surprising; but is it not an unusual occurence? Jackdaws seem ill fitted for quick aerial movements. E. G. W.

Lemmings (p. 177).—The natural food of lemmings is grass, moss, and such other vegetable substances as they may find on the high table lands which are their principal home, but in confinement they eat much the same food as rabbits and other rodents. They are naturally hardy animals, and are quite comfortable in the open air if they have a warm nesting place, but still they are not easy to keep in confinement, and of the last seven in the Zoological Gardens only two survived three months of captivity. The migration of these little animals is one of the most curious phenomena in natural history. Perhaps for twenty years not a lemming is seen, then suddenly they appear in vast flocks, whose numbers have been estimated at millions. They march forward in a straight line, devouring everything eatable which comes in their way. Nothing stops them. If a stack of corn is in their path they eat it up and pass on; if some object which they cannot eat or climb impedes them, they burrow under it. Rather than diverge from the straight line they plunge into rivers and lakes, though thousands are drowned therein, and so go boldly on to the sea coast, where they either swim out to sea and are lost, or wander up and down the coast for a few weeks till they die of starvation or disease. None ever return from these migrations, and along their whole track they leave such numbers of dead bodies that the air and water is polluted, and often a kind of typhoid fever—termed "lemming fever" follows on their trail. No entirely satisfactory reason has yet been given for these irregular migrations. F. W. ASHLEY.

Kingfisher near London.—Perhaps some of your readers would like to know that my father, while walking this morning (September 13) in the Ladywell Recreation Ground, Lewisham, saw a kingfisher in beautiful plumage on the river Ravensbourne, which at this point runs between two railways. Is it not unusual for this bird to be seen so near London?

Catford. ETHEL MARY BRITTEN.

A Lost Cat.—One of our neighbours has a fine rough cat. During the intensely sharp frost of Christmas, 1892, this animal disappeared suddenly from its home. Its mistress made inquiries in all directions, a reward was offered, and a thorough search instituted, all to no purpose—no cat was forthcoming, and we all agreed that it had been stolen. A week elapsed, and then a charwoman in an adjoining house happened to go into a small garden shed where tools and old lumber were kept, and while there thought she heard a faint scratching proceed from an old wine case which had fallen forward and lay bottom upward on the floor. She raised the box, and up started an emaciated skeleton of a cat, which rushed wildly across the garden, actually managed to jump two fences, and then fell almost in a dying state at its own door. It must on one of its marauding excursions have leaped on to the wine case, which, overbalancing, had shut it up as in a trap, and there the poor creature had remained from Sunday morning till Saturday afternoon without food all through the intense cold of that truly Arctic week. By judicious treatment, giving small doses of bread soaked in gravy, teaspoonsful of milk and brandy, &c., it was brought to life, and by the end of a week was able to creep out into the garden, looking as if it had lost five or six of its allotted lives. A. G.

High Wycombe.

Revengeful Bees.—My jay hanging in his usual nook under a large bough of ivy which forms a natural archway in our garden, was once attacked by a bee, which he promptly despatched and left dead on the floor of his cage. An hour or so elapsed, when I observed that Jacob was in an unusual state of excitement, and that a great commotion was going on in his cage. Of course I immediately went to investigate, and found myself in the midst of an angry swarm, while dead bees lay thickly strewn on his floor. He was, however, getting quite exhausted and overpowered by numbers, and I was obliged to take him indoors for protection—not an easy task in the face of such an infuriated multitude. I tried hanging him out again the next day with the same result, and for more than a week he was forced to remain a prisoner. Gradually the attacking bees ceased to avenge their comrade, and by the end of five or six days his memory was forgotten. A. G.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. W. K.—We have forwarded the stamps, but will you kindly read Rule 5?

K. R.—Stainton's "Manual of British Butterflies and Moths" (2 vols., 10s.); Kappel and Kirby's "Beetles, Butterflies and Moths" (4s.); Coleman's "British Butterflies" and Wood's "Common British Moths" (plain, 1s., coloured 3s. 6d). We cannot determine the insect from your description.

Strathmore.—Hemp (*Cannabis sativa*).

W. W.—A rayless form of *Aster Tripolium*.

F. M. B.—Mr. Kirby says:—"The caterpillar is apparently that of *Orgyia fascelina*, Linn., the dark Tussock Moth, not an uncommon species, especially in the North of England and Scotland, which feeds on a great variety of plants."

F. D. P.—Can you send a better specimen? The plant is not British.

C. H. B. W.—Hairy Tare (*Vicia hirsuta*.)

M. A. P.—*Hygrophorus coccineus*.

M. L. D.—(1) Hemp Nettle (*Galeopsis Tetrahit*); (2) Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*).

B. B. and E. S.—We cannot find room for the appeals.

Mrs. C.—See answer to **F. W. K.**

A. B.—Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*). The book you name is useful for beginners.

W. W. F.—Mr. Murray says:—"A very bad specimen of *Russula*, most likely *R. heterophylla*, but there is no stalk, and the pileus is badly preserved."

T. D.—*Cynips rosæ*.

Greyhound.—Mr. Kirby says:—"The gray larva is the grub of the common cockchafer; the yellow one is the caterpillar of the Ghost Moth."

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Leaflet Fund.—The Committee having charge of this Fund gratefully acknowledge a donation of 10s. from Miss E. Lowry; also the gift of a quantity of the back numbers of the SELBORNE MAGAZINE and NATURE NOTES from Miss M. Hope, Hon. Sec. Kensington Branch, the proceeds of their sale to be devoted to this fund.

Selborne Library.—The Council are desirous of obtaining copies of all the various editions of Gilbert White's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, for the Library. By this means they hope to form a complete bibliography of this standard work.

Lectures.—In response to the appeal in the September issue, Mr. John S. S. Cooke, F.L.S., F.G.S., (temporary address) 26, Avenue Road, Weymouth; Mr. Edward A. Martin, of "Ravenswood," 21, Carew Road, Thornton Heath; and Mr. Alfred P. Wise, M.C.I.S., of 1, Seaton Villas, Birkbeck Road, Leytonstone, have kindly offered to lecture occasionally on behalf of the Society during the winter months. Branch secretaries and others may communicate with these gentlemen direct.

Members' Addresses.—Members altering the address to which they wish the Magazine sent must notify the Secretary of the required alteration before the 15th of the month to ensure this being corrected in the following issue.

Leaflets.—The Council call the attention of Branch Secretaries to the fact that it has come to their knowledge that leaflets bearing the imprimatur of the Society have been printed and circulated by Branches, without having first been submitted to the Council for approval. As an instance of this they have recently received a tastefully-got-up and well-written leaflet, which they would have been very glad to notice and recommend for purchase, but it is marred by several errors which compel them to pass it by.

Council and Committee Meetings.—The next meetings of the Council will be held on Tuesdays, October 2 and November 6. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee meet on Wednesdays, October 17 and November 21.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Southgate.—Following the example of other suburban Branches, the Hon. Sec. of this Branch has successfully carried out some rambles in this district. He will gladly welcome any members residing in the neighbourhood.

Weybridge.—Miss H. C. Gardiner, Heath Field, Weybridge, has accepted the Hon. Secretaryship of this Branch, which has been vacant for some time.

New Branches.—Branches are in process of formation at Barmouth and Roehampton, and any unattached members or others wishing to join are requested to communicate with Mr. D. Arthur Hughes, M.R.C.S., Barmouth, and Captain J. Henry Chippendall-Healy, The Old Mill, Roehampton, near Havant, who have kindly volunteered to act as Hon. Secretaries in their respective districts.

Communications for this page must be received not later than October 15 to appear in the November issue.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 59. NOVEMBER, 1894. Vol. V.

A BIRD-LOVED SUBURB.

TO those who love the sights and sounds of rural life, no suburb of London is so pleasant to live in as Richmond. The park affords a perennial charm; the less known and less visited surroundings of the park furnish scenes whereof the interest is well-nigh inexhaustible; and the Terrace garden that we owe to the laudable enterprise of the town presents lovely slopes, terraced walks and flowers, and charming river-peeps, with varied aspects of plant-life and bird-life, the like of which it would be difficult to find on any other spot whatever, so near to London. This garden, which was for a long time a ducal pleasaunce, preserves relics of its former splendour in statues that still show traces of original excellence of design; in cosy bowers for pairs, each of which seems, as it were, formed of the half of a canoe, cut in two, and set upright on the plane of bisection; in grand old magnolias, putting out in autumn large flowers that are loved and haunted by honey-seeking bees; and in fine foreign trees and shrubs, such as the prettily foliaged *Salisburia adiantifolia*, which bears the name, not of a modern statesman, as some have supposed, but of a botanist who flourished when the tree was imported from Japan. Then, too, pleasant Petersham, with all its poetic memories, forms an integral part of Richmond on the south, and on the north as a similar part of the borough, we have all the glory, and the wealth, and the beauty of Kew Gardens. There we may find the floral treasures of the whole of the world preserved, and displayed in choicest form, and placed before us in complete scientific nomenclature, to afford us never-ending objects for study or for enjoyment. There we may admire the glorious flower of the Victoria lily from the Amazon, or study such trees

as the gigantic Sequoia from California; with every variety of shrub, or tree, or flower that any region of the earth can produce. Best of all is, however, to me, that herbaceous ground, which forms a little walled-in garden of itself, where we may see, and admire, the floral beauties of our own land, all exhibited in the best way to enable us to recognise and study them. This little garden may well convince us that our own country is truly a land of flowers. The loved flowers that adorn our meadows and hedgerows are here set forth in all their glory. The thistles and mulleins that we see on the Devonian headland; the fragrant violet that nestles modestly in the neighbouring combes; the daisy that is alike the child's delight and "the poet's darling;" the very groundsel that we gather for our canaries; all these and a thousand such familiar pets, here greet us, sometimes with surprise, among the whole array of their kindred, whether of lowly, or it may be, of highly distinguished relations.

Mistakes are often made, no doubt, in Richmond, in regard to the cutting down of ancient oaks or cedars, or the clearing away of bird-loved thickets; and it is not always easy anyhow to find out to whom these depredations are due; but kindly nature, in so fertile a region, soon repairs the damage or supplies the loss; thus the regrettable act of vandalism is, before long, swept entirely out of sight and out of mind.

There are around Richmond many things that delight the lover of nature, poetic and historical associations, river-scenes, plant-life, and much else. With its increasing purity, the river goes on affording, more and more, the delights of *tidal* flow and ebb. In quiet times, when not a single angler is near, the fish may be seen leaping joyously out of the water, increasing, it would seem, in size, as the times of purification pass on. Two or three times, in foregoing days of foulness, I have seen, with much amazement, a huge porpoise swimming upward, with the tide, towards Teddington Lock, the highest point it could reach; and when, by-and-by, with ebbing tide, it came down again, every boat in Richmond seemed to be out, with gun or rifle, to shoot at the huge fish, almost as much in vain, it would appear, as if the firing had been aimed at an iron-clad. In descending the polluted stream, the last of these piscine visitors became so weakened that it had, at length, to succumb to the poisoning effects of the stream wherein it swam.

While all this is very pleasant, and well deserving of attention, there is, perhaps, nothing to surpass that in which the district is very rich, bird-life. This we may watch and study with delight everywhere around, at any hour of the day, and at all times of the year. In regard to our district, where, to the nature-lover, all seasons are delightful in their varied aspects, the chief question that arises is which season he likes the best. To one the warmth, and glow, and radiance of summer would seem the best, with June-roses and flowers fully displayed, and all the wealth of the "crown of the year." To another, dearest is the

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness! close bosom friend of the maturing sun
Conspiring with him how to load and bless with fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run."

This is autumn, gorgeous with colours of closing foliage, and the manifold beauties of fruit-gathering and harvest. But to me the season dearest of all is the spring. Then, every avenue to Richmond is a mass of floral blossom, the admiration of every visitor. Then we look for the return from the palm-groves of Africa of the migrant birds; then we listen for the voice of the cuckoo, the turr-turr of the turtle, the song of the nightingale; then we watch for the skimming flight of the swallow; and then, too, with the great bird-loving poet we say that

"Once more the heavenly power makes all things new;
And domes the red-plowed hills with loving blue;
The blackbirds have their wills, the thrushes, too;
Opens a door in heaven, from skies of glass,
A Jacob's ladder falls, on greening grass;
And o'er the mountain walls young angels pass."

Though Richmond is ever pleasant, it is to me pleasantest in spring; and then, especially, it is most delightful in the awakening of the bird-life that always forms a world of delight. In this region, one may be ready to admit that

"Even winter bleak has charms for me, when winds howl through the naked tree;
When frosts on hill-top, bush and lea, are hoary grey,
And blinding mists wild, furious flee, darkening the day."

Then it is that some aspects of bird-life may be observed with the deepest interest. Then it is that the birds that brave with us the cold, and the fogs, and the storms, will become to a bird-lover strangely familiar. Then the hard-pressed thrushes, or rooks, or starlings will gladly welcome the smallest bit of food that you may accord to them, will come with joy to the well-remembered feeding-place, and will, by-and-by, almost take therefrom the food out of your hand. Then the little robin, or wren, or hedge-warbler, who retains his song all through the winter, will gladden your heart by seeming to thank you for the grateful food by singing you his modest little song.

As we walk round in autumn, we may note how the trees and shrubs that embellish spring-tide now present beauties of berries and fruits that furnish, in winter, food for the birds. The hawthorn that forms the glory of May is now laden with haws; the briar-rose with hips, which always go first; the ivy with its black berries, which ripen last of all, and then furnish luscious fruits, sought like grapes by all the thrush tribe; and the rowan or mountain-ash, with red berries, which are eaten by the birds in winter long before the haws. The quality of these fruits varies, even more than the size. Among the trees near Ham Gate there is a hawthorn which, I observe, is always cleared first. But of all trees none furnishes birds with so much food as that pride of Richmond Park, the oak. In summer, the blackcap and other small birds pick from oaks the caterpillars

with which they mainly feed their young. There is no tree on which all the thrush tribe love so much to sing. And in autumn many birds are eager to feed on the acorns; rooks pick them off the trees, doves and pigeons fill their crops full of them, and the pheasants come greedily out for them from every covert.

In the early spring, it is interesting to see how the birds that spend all the winter with us—unless, like thrushes, they belong to those kinds that never use the same nest twice—look up their old nests, clear out the accumulations of winter, repair the dilapidations, if the nest admits of repair or, if the storms have used the nest badly, forthwith set to work to build a new one. All this is clearly visible before the leaves come out, and much familiar colloquy accompanies the settlement of this spring-cleaning of the birds. At that time we may look up from the street and see forty or fifty rooks' nests standing out upon the leafless elms on the top of the hill, and mark the eagerness of the parent birds in preparing a home for their young. Last winter (1893-4) the storms had blown clean away most of the old nests; and in building the new nests it might be marked that certain birds seemed to have a recognised right to certain convenient sites. From mounds on the western edge of the park, two or three rookeries may be looked down upon, at such times, in a more minute way.

In autumn, the rooks often gather in large flocks, and go through complicated evolutions above or among the trees. Mingled with them often are some jackdaws, distinguishable by smaller size, three times quicker beat of wing, and sharper jack or croak. The flock will caw and jack, and wheel and soar to a lofty height, and sweep together round and round, and dive headlong, all in turn, and seem to throw themselves against some favourite tree, now in apparent pairs, and now in an entire mass. The movements of the combined rooks and jackdaws, sometimes mixed with ambitious starlings, are full of interest. The starlings are always noteworthy in their habits. Distinguishable from the blackbirds by their mode of walking—one foot before the other alternately, instead of hopping with both feet at once—they gather in flocks towards autumn, and may then be seen on the grass-plots, closely probing every spot for grubs with their spear-like beaks. As spring returns, they separate in pairs and look up their old nests, and then clear them out with much familiar colloquy and prattle, and singing by the male of his soft little song. For years, a pair has built in a favourite haunt by our own house, and as the male gets his heightened colour, the pair seem to be talking to each other as they look in and greet me when I am dressing; while often when I come home, the brighter male sings to me from a ledge, in the last rays of the dying day. The starling has the art to learn the notes of other birds; thus, when the ground is, perhaps, covered with snow, I am startled to catch, from tree or housetop, an imitation of the clear note of the swallow.

Looking after their old nests in spring, like the rooks, are those other life-paired birds, the stately herons. Few people seem to know that there is in Richmond Park a fine heronry. The nests are among evergreen trees in a secluded enclosure; and the herons, at breeding time, sit in stately fashion, on or beside their nests; thus, unless the birds spread their large wings for flight, it is often difficult to see them. An occasional cry from an unobserved heron sometimes startles a visitor, ignorant of what the sound comes from. The motions of the herons in the air are full of stateliness and grace. Sometimes we see them mounting in large spirals to a great height; but more often they may be observed moving slowly home across the Thames, with neck drawn back and legs stretched at full length behind, to act as a sort of rudder. An ardent ornithologist records how that he once got inside the enclosure where the heronry stands, saw some young birds on the ground running towards the lake; and he describes the tumult of agitation that took place overhead as he disturbed the herons from their nests, and witnessed the large-winged birds flying about in anxious alarm, among the tree-tops. A feat of trespass like this, though detailed in a London weekly journal, is, I presume, rarely attempted. But one can easily imagine what the sport of hawking must have been in old times, with a heron for the quarry. Some years ago the herons left their usual nesting-place for a few years, and built on a large *oak*, a little way off, inside the edge of the Isabella Plantation; and there, before the leaves came out, the nests could be seen with great ease. But the birds have now all got back to the old heronry.

Next in interest to the herons come the swans. Standing on the eminence by White Lodge, we may sometimes see half-a-dozen swans sailing in line aloft towards the Pen Ponds or Lakes, with necks outstretched to full length and a peculiar utterance constantly going on as they wing their way through the air. At other times, we may see them swimming about one of the lakes, and in June and July it is pleasant to watch a pair carefully tending and guarding their cygnets near the islet on the upper lake, while a moorhen swims outside with three pretty little chicks. In July of this year (1894), two old swans were quietly swimming about with *seven* cygnets, forming quite a large family-party, as if they were one brood. Seeing that in general, two or three cygnets are all that a brood contains, it would seem that two or more broods must, in this family, have been here somehow united. Some large fish, presumably pike, were then at times sporting like porpoises in both lakes.

Richmond-on-Thames. W. J C. MILLER.

(*To be concluded next month.*)

THE DESTRUCTION OF NATURAL SCENERY.

TAMPERING with the natural beauties of heaths and commons has not yet become extinct. The author of that excellent work, *English Commons and Forests*, noticed on pp. 61-7, warned his readers that notwithstanding all that had been done to fortify our open spaces against attack, the enemy would still find weak spots in the line of defence. That presage has but lately been only too well justified, a couple of instances now to be related being ready to hand.

It seems strange that the inhabitants of a district who have had the good sense to purchase for their own enjoyment the remainder of what was once a fine open space, should mar their work by trying to rival Nature as a landscape gardener. Yet such is the case, a correspondent writes to say, at Hayward's Heath, near Brighton. The whole of the heath, save one portion, was enclosed many years ago, and gave its name to the township which was built upon it. The piece of open common that was left has now become public property, but the authorities at Hayward's Heath are treating their acquisition in an extraordinary manner. The furze is being cut down, and the whole of this bit of "lovely wild heath," as our correspondent terms it, is being laid out as a formal garden. When a large common has been secured for public recreation, this is rarely done on account of the expense (though we shall shortly detail a notable exception to this general rule); but small open spaces are peculiarly liable to suffer in this way, as they afford a special temptation to the meddling propensities of local boards and similar bodies, whose attempts at horticulture often end in egregious failure. On that account, therefore, it becomes us to raise our voices against the designs of the would-be horticulturist quite as much as against the inroads of the speculative builder. Let us not be misunderstood; no one would be so foolish as to condemn the transformation of a rough, swampy meadow, for instance, which is not common land, into a smiling garden; but no amount of showy beds and bright borders can compensate for the effacement of the furze, heather thyme, eyebright, bedstraw and harebell, which are scattered in profusion all over our English heaths and commons.

A case of graver issue presents itself in the matter of Mitcham Common, a large open space of 6,000 acres, lying between Mitcham and Croydon. Some years ago this common was placed under the Metropolitan Commons Act. The Corporation of the City of London made a grant of £500 in aid of its general maintenance, and its care and control were vested in an elective body of conservators. But the lords of the manor seem to have retained their rights, and to have gone on removing the gravel and digging the turf in the same reprehensible manner as for years past. A golf club from London appeared on the

scene, and after a time obtained a lease from the conservators to play golf on the common for a low rent, which has since been doubled on condition that the lease may run for twenty-one years. The club, moreover, have purchased the manorial rights for £2,500, and are said to have handed the same over to the conservators, on consideration that they are allowed to use the common for their own purposes. But as the correspondent to the *Daily Graphic* of Sept. 18, from whom the above facts are mainly quoted, points out, the conservators will have to buy the rights for £2,500, supposing the licence be at any time revoked, so that there is very little of "giving" or "handing over" about the matter. For the benefit of those readers who may be but slightly informed of the circumstances of the case, we may state that the action of the golfers has aroused a lively discussion in some of the daily journals, not a few correspondents and contributors taking the side of the club, and with apparent show of reason. The scandalous action of the lords of the manor in denuding the common of its turf and gravel is largely responsible for this. To suit their own purposes the golf club have filled up several of the pits, and re-turfed the bare spots. This has gained them a name for philanthropy. But furze and thorn interfere with golf drives, so the furze has had to go, and has been replaced by young trees surrounded with barbed wire—an unnecessary and dangerous adjunct.

It would be venturing too far to say that golf should not be played on any of our open spaces. Some of them—such as Wimbledon Common, Blackheath, and Chingford Plain at Epping Forest—have areas absolutely devoid of vegetation, save the turf, and are old-established golfing grounds. Still, considering the stringent limits assigned on our open spaces and in our parks to the votaries of cricket, football and lawn tennis, golfers cannot complain if the public view with suspicion the wide range they claim as their right, wherever they establish themselves.

But at Mitcham the natural objects of the scenery are being sacrificed in order to suit the convenience of the players. A recent contributor to the *Globe* newspaper opines that Mitcham Common has absolutely nothing picturesque about it, is as flat as a pancake and is largely overgrown with furze. He seems to hold the beauties of this shrub very cheap. The yellow blossoms of the furze bespangle this plain at intervals throughout the year; limited in its area, for it is little if anywhere found out of England, it is nevertheless abundant on every common; no plant deserves better of mankind, yet few fare worse, what with the burning and cutting to which it is subjected—a process that has been going on at Mitcham in full swing.

It is questionable to the last degree whether the conservators had any right to grant a lease for twenty-one years to the Prince's Golf Club, thus allowing the club to get more and more power over the common each succeeding year. We can but

look to the aid of the Commons Preservation Society to check the mischief that has already been done, and nip in the bud any further developments; for if this course of action is allowed in one spot, it will be followed up by something worse in another. The lesson we would drive home to all those who commend and applaud the destructive work wrought by the golf club at Mitcham, is that Nature's handiwork must not be ruined to suit a required end.

ARCHIBALD CLARKE.

TWO OF MY PETS.

ONE of the tamest and most affectionate rabbits I had was a white doe whose fur was so spotless that she looked like a little white lamb—a toy lamb I mean. On this account I called her "Agnes." She knew her name and would come immediately when called by it. When quite a little mite she broke her right leg, and I, having been brought up to veterinary surgery, set it for her, and in a few months' time it was as sound as the other. It was doubtless the petting she received at my hands which made her so tame and fond of me. When she grew older she delighted to jump on my knee and sit there and go to sleep.

She had a very pretty way of jumping about on her hind legs. Other rabbits would sit up in an erect posture for a minute when expecting a caress or some dainty green leaf, but Agnes would follow me about with her fore legs in the air and her head stretched up as high as possible, jumping along almost like a little kangaroo. I kept my bunnies in an out-house, next to which was a portion of the garden fenced in with wire netting. This was their exercise ground, and it was to me a real pleasure to watch them jumping and frisking about. The floor of their pen I found it advisable to pave with flagstones and bricks, but I was accoustomed to having a barrow load or two of sand thrown down in a heap for them to amuse themselves burrowing in. I had hutches for them but these were only used for sleeping places, and they were only fastened in at night.

I have kept but few birds in captivity, as I have always considered it cruel to keep such lovers of freedom in a small cage where they can scarcely stretch their wings. My feathered pets were the birds which frequented our garden in the winter and which I regularly fed. The thrushes, blackbirds, robins and wrens, not to mention the sparrows, which would almost take the bread out of my hands, were on most familiar terms with me, and I could not have seen more of them had I kept them in an aviary. One winter, however, I found a poor frozen-out moorhen, cowering under a gooseberry bush. I took the poor dying bird up and put it in a packing case, then gave it

water and some boiled potatoes and bread. It would not touch either, so I covered it up as warm as I could and put some hay in the box for it. On looking in the next morning the bird was quite lively, and opened its bill in a menacing way. I found it had eaten all the potatoes and drank the water, so I gave it a fresh supply and this was soon swallowed. Although the bird would not allow me to handle it, and always retreated to the darkest corner or crept under the hay when I went to the box, it soon became tame enough to eat its food in my presence if I stood a few feet away and kept perfectly still. I resolved to make a pen and keep the bird in it, and it lived peaceably for four years in its new abode. I placed a large pan of water for it to bathe in, and it had a packing case to sleep in. It would get out at intervals and wander about the garden, but never attempted to escape altogether. After being out of its pen for perhaps an entire day and night it would go quietly back again. I fed it on earthworms, snails, scraps of meat, potatoes and barley. This last it was very fond of, but would never eat dry; I always had to throw it into its "pond" and let it pick the grains out at leisure when well soaked. It would also eat bread. I regret to say it was killed by a cat on returning home in the morning after one of its nocturnal rambles about the garden.

ALBERT H. WATERS.

SUPPOSED LONG DELAYED GERMINATION.

MR. COCKERELL alludes in NATURE NOTES (p. 164), to "the problem as to seeds germinating which were supposed to have been long buried in the soil." He rightly adds that "it is very far from being proved that the seeds were originally in the soil." Many cases are on record of bulbs, seeds, &c., growing after prolonged periods; thus, *e.g.*, Mr. Munby found a species of narcissus sprouting in his herbarium after twenty-two years. Similarly, in my own experience, a bulb of the medicinal squill (*Urginea Scilla*) used for lecturing purposes at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School, sprouted after being kept in a cabinet about twenty years; and a seed of *Banksia australis* grew into a tree after being in the nut for twenty years. The stories, however, of "mummy" wheat having germinated are utterly fallacious, as I have shown in this Journal for 1890, p. 119. As a still older instance, Dr. Lindley recorded (*Introduction to Botany*, ii., p. 267) a supposed discovery of a Mr. Kemp, described in the *Annals of Natural History* (vol. xiii., p. 89), and he says:—"This is one of the few instances in which the suspension of vitality of seeds for a very long period is unquestionable." The seeds in question are said to have been found in a peaty bed at the bottom

of a sand-pit, below twenty-five feet in thickness of stratified sand. Mr. Kemp thought that a lake had once been formed at the place, long before the Roman period, by the Tweed. On sowing the seeds they proved to be *Polygonum aviculare*, *P. Convolvulus*, and an *Atriplex*, not lake or water-plants at all. Mr. Kemp's description of his experiment in his own words in a letter to my father, which I now have before me, together with his dried specimens, is as follows: dated Galashiels, Sept. 22nd, 1843:—"I sew (*sic*) a little in pots wich (*sic*) I kept in the house admiting (*sic*) air by the window, and a part in my garden, &c." Now, as the plants raised are the commonest of weeds, and as not even Mr. Kemp himself, but a workman, who was excavating the finer sand, first saw them, there is no proof whatever that the seeds had not blown down from above. Moreover, Mr. Kemp says nothing about the earth in which he grew them, either in the pot or in his garden, having been first tested to see that there were none in it. Consequently, this case breaks down, as being entirely devoid of strict scientific accuracy.

It has been noticed over and over again, that when the subsoil is first exposed, as on railway embankments, &c., plants suddenly appear which cannot be easily accounted for. To test the idea that seeds lie dormant beneath the surface, on an occasion when turf had to be removed at Kew, the Director had a portion of the exposed soil protected, the rest being left open. After a time, the latter was covered with plants, while the former had none: clearly showing that the seeds had come to it and had not been previously within the soil. On the other hand, cases do occur when plants, quite unknown in the neighbourhood before, suddenly appear. I have, for example, a specimen of *Camelina sativa*, a quantity of which came up in a railway cutting made at Steyning, Sussex, in the year 1859. I had never seen it anywhere there before, and it disappeared afterwards. As another remarkable coincidence of a sudden appearance, *Sisymbrium Irio*, the London rocket, may be mentioned. Ray remarks that, after the Great Fire of London, this plant came up abundantly among the rubbish in the ruins. Baxter, in his *Genera of British Plants*, observes:—"A circumstance somewhat analogous to the above occurred this season in the Oxford Botanic Garden. During the time the alterations were going on in the garden last year (1834), the rubbish was removed to a piece of ground on the outside of the walls; this rubbish, as it accumulated, was set fire to from time to time, and was frequently burning for two or three days together, so that in the course of the season a considerable quantity of ashes was produced. Having received, in the spring of the present year (1835) a valuable collection of cuttings of nearly all the species of British willows, from W. Borrer, Esq., of Henfield, Sussex, this was the only piece of ground which we could appropriate as a *salicetum*, and in order to prepare it for the reception of the cuttings, the ashes were spread regularly over the surface, and the whole of it was

trenched over; in a short time, the very spot on which the rubbish was burnt, produced an abundant and very luxuriant crop of *Sisymbrium trio*, and that on a part of the garden where I never remember to have seen it before." It would seem, therefore, that the problem has not yet been altogether solved.

GEORGE HENSLOW.

[Since this article was in type, a correspondence concerning the growth of wheat found in Egyptian tombs has appeared in one or two of the daily papers. We hope to publish in our next issue some remarks on this subject by Mr. Carruthers.—ED. *N.N.*]

A SUSSEX BEECH WOOD.

THE little hill, falling in steep degrees,
Is half made bare, half hid in last year's leaves
By fitful gusts of summer wind, that weaves
The liquid air through green interstices.
Here foliage of the many-branchèd trees
Almost across the faint horizon reaches,
And burnished stems of elfin-haunted beeches
Above the crest show their wind-knotted knees—
There, outlined dark, the rolling Sussex weald
And far off sky, through arches yellow green,—
Depth beyond depth of blueness—is revealed,
A hazy land seen sunlit boughs between.

So pleasant is the place that all are fain
Long thus to linger gazing on the plain.

R. C. P.

THE ATACAMA DESERT.

AT the extreme east of this desert there is a valley about thirty-five miles long and six miles broad, in Bolivia, surrounded by a range of mountains, part of the Mid Andes. In this valley, near the Ascoton and Inca mountain, there is a large lake of fresh water. Near to this there is a spring of hot water that flows into the large lake. This is a source of comfort to the numerous fish that abound in the large lake, but it is often a disastrous trap for the flamingoes which come in large numbers from the lower lands of Bolivia. These flamingoes are red in plumage, with very long legs, and have their beaks twisted in a curious fashion. After successfully fishing the warmer portion of the lake they at night-fall take their rest in the shallow water at the edge. So long as they select the warm spot all is well with them, but frequently numbers settle down in places beyond the influence of the warm stream,

and during the night their legs become icebound, and early in the morning the Indians are able to capture them before the sun has melted the ice.

The vicuñas—animals allied to the llama and alpaca—make long journeys to this lake for water to drink. They travel in lots of six in a row, the old male going first and the others follow on the way to the lake. Indians erect a few loose stones into a kind of hut, and if they pass near the Indians shoot the third or fourth vicuña. Then the others all stop and look at it, and then another one is shot, but not the old male. They are then skinned, and the wool from the skin is sold at very high prices. In a very short time condors may be seen flying about, supposed be to 20,000 feet high, and without a quiver in the wing; and when all is clear they come down and eat the remains of the animal. In this valley the crude borate is found a foot below; a hard substance like sand and salt is collected and sent to England to be manufactured into borax and boracic acid. For many miles round there is not a blade of grass or leaf to be seen of any kind—in fact, going west, towards the Pacific, we rode about seventy miles without a sign of vegetation of any kind, and for some days we travelled without seeing any animal or insect life of any sort.

ARTHUR ROBOTTOM.

SOME BOOKS ON NATURAL HISTORY.*

WE ought perhaps to begin with an apology for the title we have chosen, for the author of the book which stands last on the list tells us that the term "Natural History" is generally discarded by modern writers in favour of "Natural Science." We must, however, confess to a fondness for an old friend, and to a hope that it may not disappear from our vocabulary, nor the kind of observation which it properly designates from our practice.

The four works now before us serve very well to indicate the nature of the domain which at the present day the observer of nature seeks to claim for his own. That which we have named first, *Lux Naturæ*, is natural history in its most sublimated form, dealing with metaphysical rather than biological topics, and being devoted to a demonstration of a system of theism so abstruse that we dare not venture to summarise it. It may be sufficient to present our readers with the following sample of its method: "At the meeting of two persons through whom similar etheric rays pass they would at once feel that they were so sympathetically attached as to have the same thoughts in common. The ether in the one person, being similar in tenuity to the ether in the other, would at once sympathetically associate itself with it; the two ethers would become

* *Lux Naturæ, Nerve System of the Universe:* a new demonstration of an old law; by David Sinclair (London: Elliot Stock, pp. 188.) *Biological Lectures and Addresses;* by the late Arthur Milnes Marshall (London: David Nutt, pp. viii., 363). *Ponds and Rock Pools*, with hints on collecting for and management of the micro-aquarium, by Henry Scherren (Religious Tract Society, pp. 208, price 2s. 6d.). *Industries of Animals*, Contemporary Science Series, from the French of Frederick Houssay (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., pp. 258, with 44 illustrations, price 3s. 6d.).

one, and the etheric communications made to the one individual would be the same to the other; any communication made *from* the world by the ether would be received by the other; for the time being the two would be so far mentally joined into one person" (p. 40).

The name of Professor Milnes Marshall, whose tragic death on Scawfell is yet recent, is a sufficient guarantee that whatever bears his name is quite up-to the level of modern scientific research. In the papers before us he devotes himself principally to a study of the past life of animals, rather than the present, tracing in considerable detail what he supposes to have been their ancestry. It is, however, surely neither just nor humorous, and perhaps unwise, to give such an extravagant account as the following, of the methods of the human genealogist:

"Would we learn these facts [concerning our own pedigree], we know that there are those whose profession it is to supplement our deficiencies of memory or of information on these points, and who are prepared, for a sum of half-a-crown, to provide the enquirer with a duly attested pedigree dating from the time of the Conquest. For a guinea a Roman Emperor can be obtained; while the avaricious in such matters, who are prepared to spend a five-pound note, may satisfy themselves, and for all we know, truthfully, of their descent from a Pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty" (p. 193). It is a grievous defect in a book of this nature that it should be without an index.

In *Ponds and Rock Pools* Mr. Scherren has a most enticing subject, which of necessity leads him and his readers into the open air, under which alone such things are found. He, however, in uniformity with modern fashion, casts over his researches in the woodlands or on the shore an air of the study which for many must rob them of half their charm. We wish he could have seen his way to tell us more of the creatures concerning which he knows so much—that would present them to us as living and acting beings, rather than as learned specimens. The following typical passage, though unquestionably instructive, can scarcely be called attractive to the general reader.

"There will probably be dotted here and there on the film-covered weed, a Vorticella-like animalcule with a body $\frac{1}{500}$ inch long, fixed in a rigid stalk or column, about a quarter the length of the body. This will be one of the species of Rhabdostyla—probably *R. ovum*; and a knowledge of this, as well as of the preceding genus is necessary before we can understand how the compound forms. Carchesium, and Zoöthamnium, Epistylis and Opercularia, may have developed" (p. 59). To the practical microscopist, however, for whom the book seems to be intended, it should be of great use.

Despite his remarks on the term, the author of *Industries of Animals* treats his readers to what is much more like the old "Natural History" than any of the books we have considered, recounting a number of instances in which various creatures perform operations analogous to those of man, in hunting, fighting, building, provision storing, slave making, and the like. Unfortunately, as we must think, he collects his facts with a purpose, which is to show that the mental faculties of the lower animals are like in nature to our own, which seems to make him ready to accept stories for the truth of which we should wish to have very explicit evidence. This is the more unfortunate, as his whole book has the appearance of being composed more from the materials obtained by reading than from actual observation. He tells us, for example, of the wonderful fencing skill exhibited by the African Secretary bird in his combats with poisonous serpents, but says nothing of the equally remarkable feats of our own titmice and flycatchers in dealing with bees and wasps. More to his purpose than some of the stories he tells would seem to be the instinct which leads a thrush to smash a snail-shell on a stone, or crows on the coast to drop shell-fish on the rocks, taking them up higher if the first attempt is unsuccessful, or that which teaches a water-hen to build its nest higher before a flood. On the other hand, we should like a more precise authority than "it is said" for the strange things he tells us of the methods by which the fox circumvents the hedge-hog, or for such an account as the following:—"A snake is very embarrassed when he has swallowed an entire egg with the shell; he cannot digest it in that condition, and the muscles of his stomach are not strong enough to break it. The snake often finds himself in this condition, and is then accustomed either to strike his body against hard

objects, or to coil himself around them until he has broken the envelope of the eggs he contains" (p. 47). J. G.

Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms, by M. C. Cooke, M.A., LL.D. (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1894, pp. viii., 126, 18 coloured plates, 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.). A really simple and useful little book on this subject is much needed, in spite of the abundant popular literature that has been produced with the purpose of supplying it. The best book (Mr. Worthington Smith's *Mushrooms and Toadstools*, with two large sheets of figures) is, we understand, out of print, and Dr. M. C. Cooke's recent work on *British Edible Fungi* has many unsatisfactory features. This one has the advantages of dealing at a low price with both edible and poisonous forms, and of greater simplicity of treatment. It will suit the beginner who desires to be able to recognise a few forms, and will probably serve to launch him on the troubles of the study of fungi. The so-called English names, embracing such eccentricities as "Styptic Side-foot" are regrettable concessions to the unreasoning view that such formulæ are more easily remembered than the Latin equivalents. Those who wish to be carried further and acquire a more scientific guide cannot do better than expend fourpence on a copy of the *Guide to the Sowerby's Models of Fungi* in the British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, as to which we published a note last year (NATURE NOTES, 1893, p. 188). G. M.

SELBORNIANA.

A Protest.—It is because I value the aims of the Selborne Society, and always read the magazine with pleasure, that I feel obliged to enter a protest against the little poem "Autumn Berries," in the October number. The Selborne Society side of life needs to be far more widely spread; it is not widely enough felt to be able to afford to weaken its case. If we stamp as wrong and cruel the plucking of hawthorn and wild rose, we simply make ourselves ridiculous for nothing. A poem will have to be written, begging that a flower or two may be spared for poor mankind, if such ideas spread much further. I daresay it was not meant quite so seriously as it reads; but we do need to keep from *ultra*-sentiment when we (rightly) take a sentimental side—else, as I say, we weaken our case. Here in the country there are far more hips and haws than the dear birds can eat. Hips and haws do not keep for ever; and when birds starve it is because the berries have dropped, or gone bad, rather than because they are eaten. Sometimes they will leave holly berries on the tree all through bitter cold. They do not seem to touch blackberries; but then they have such heaps of provisions just now. We have often wondered in winter that they did not finish the haws, but left them red on the boughs till they fell—and yet we make our home sweet with branches of may-blossom in its time. Nature provides for us both, do not you think? We do love the birds, but I sometimes wish they could learn to be more thrifty! They may have their good of the garden and welcome; but 'twere more grateful an they would finish one great pear before knocking off another and another. They will mash the *Rosa rugosa* berries till the whole bush looks untidy, and yet only take a little out of each hip.

When a bush is cleared at one stroke, as the ripe gooseberries always are, and the Pyracantha when it is reddest, I suppose it is a flock of one kind of bird, starlings or other, that does the work; but these are the exception. Whatever they do, birds are our nicest neighbours, and it is partly to clear their character from this suggestion of a grudging spirit, which they certainly do not feel, that I write. If your Committee could see its way to go back to the charming old lily title-page I should be so glad. It is the only change that has not been an improvement. J. E. NEWMAN.

[Although we think Mrs. Newman takes Miss Wood's verses too seriously, there is a good deal to be said for the view she puts forward—a view which we have more than once expressed—that the adoption of the principles dear to Selbornians is in danger of being hindered by over-zealous advocacy. We have

before us a letter from a lady protesting against the interesting article on the Grouse in our last number. "In common with many Selborne Society members, I am a vegetarian," she writes, "and these articles give a flavour of the slaughter-house and cookery book which is very distasteful." We must not think that because we are virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale. We yield to none in our anxiety to protect from wanton destruction the birds, insects and flowers of our land; but we have small sympathy with those who would forbid to others the pleasure derived from the presence of wild flowers in, it may be, dull and crowded rooms, or who would entirely suppress the collection, under due restrictions, of birds' eggs or insects. We have reason to know that there is a danger lest some of our most valued members should leave our ranks as a protest against the undue zeal manifested by certain enthusiasts, and we can ill afford to lose any of our sympathisers. We were not consulted as to the change of the design on the cover; but did Mrs. Newman ever see a branching lily?—ED. *N.N.*]

Rare Birds—Shot!—"On September 18, a most remarkable and beautiful bird was shot in the grounds at Padeswood Hall. It resembled a parrot except that it was smaller, was silver grey in colour, with a pale pink breast and tipped wings. Two of these birds have been observed feeding on a stubble field, adjoining Padeswood Hall, for a fortnight, and many have tried to secure them."

The above appeared in the *Chester Chronicle* of October 6. This is the way in which much that is interesting in our bird life disappears from the country. The moment some strange bird is seen, all are out after it with guns, to follow that stupid plan of having it stuffed and put in a box with a glass in front of it, and some imaginary rock-work and a badly painted landscape behind. Such scarecrows stare at us in every country inn parlour, and the Padeswood Hall people ought to have known better.

Kelsall, Chester. W. H. CASH.

Here is another cutting, showing a yet more disgraceful state of things:—

"A fine specimen of the reeve or female ruff was recently shot on the Irrigation Farm. The reeve was at one time abundant in our fens and marshy districts, but is now fast becoming extinct as a British bird. A great tern was shot at Bletsoe near the river, and a female of the very dark variety of the screech owl at Harrold. A merlin falcon, the smallest English hawk, was killed at Goldington last week, and three large herons and five specimens of the beautiful long-ear owl have lately fallen to the gun of the sportsman [!] in this neighbourhood."—*Bedfordshire Times.*

The Southwark Trees (p. 194).—*London* says: "A report, presented to the Vestry, on the condition of the trees, states that out of the total 420, forty are dead. Two hundred and fifty trees were in a fair condition. The contract for the trees has yet two years to run." A very simple calculation shows, therefore, that, besides the dead trees, no fewer than 130 of those for which the Vestry is responsible are not even in a "fair" condition—are, in fact, dying. A further deduction must be made of those which are of the wrong kind of tree—poplars, birches, &c., instead of planes, as contracted for—so that only about half of the trees are even fairly satisfactory.

We first called attention to this matter in August. Nearly three months have elapsed, yet nothing has been done save the meeting of an inefficient committee to "consider the subject." "The contract for the trees has yet two years to run." Why, then, has the surveyor to the Vestry not been instructed to see that the contractor carries out his agreement? We intend to keep this matter before the public until something has been done to remedy the existing disgraceful state of things, and we hope to publish some illustrations showing the condition in which St. George's Vestry is content to allow its trees to remain.

"Feather Trimmings."—A letter from the Secretary of the Selborne Society under this heading has appeared in most of the daily papers, and has elicited much correspondence, which the pressure upon our space will not allow us even to summarise.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

English Plant Names.—The English Dialect Society is anxious to include the Supplement to the *Dictionary of English Plant Names* among its issues for 1894. Those who have any additions to make, or any notes upon names already recorded, are invited to send them as soon as possible to Mr. Britten, 18, West Square, Southwark, S.E.

The Dove and the Olive-leaf.—"And the dove came to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off" (Genesis viii.). Is it not a common thought on reading about this, that Noah's dove was in some special way heaven-directed, to serve a special purpose? Yet the dove of our own day acts in precisely the same manner, and does the same kind of thing. Doves have doubtless done so year after year, for love-seasons immemorial. That sweet bird of old, innocent of the deep import of her simple act, plucks the olive leaf in obedience to the self-same instinct that to this day guides her kind. This at least it seems to be, from observations made during last month on the ways of a tame dove, who with his mate are family pets in a house I know, here in the north of Scotland. The pair fly about and roam at will through the house and garden, their cage door being always open. While their second brood was hatching, the male bird would often pluck a flower from the glasses on the dining-room table—a pink sweet pea was always a favourite—and carrying it to the cage would lay it tenderly across his wife's neck as she sat on the nest. Sometimes he would choose a long green stalk with leaves and tendrils wherewith to decorate her. Primroses would be carried off in the same way while the nest was building, and placed within it. Certainly "it looks natural," as country-folk say, when a dove is seen carrying something green in its bill. This dove has a history. Three years ago, one cold October morning, it appeared outside the door and crept to our feet. No one knew whence it came; it was starved, wounded, shivering with cold. The wound (on the right side) was a strange one: it was *square*, and as if cut by some sharp instrument down to the bone. The poor bird was at once received into the house and most carefully and kindly nourished and nursed, until gradually its dreadful wound was healed. The feathers grew again, and covered up the place, although the hole in the flesh has never been completely filled. "Cushie doo"* soon became quite tame and utterly devoted to the master who had cured it by his care. It would come to his call, and perch on his shoulder or sit on his knee with the most touching confidence. Only since a few months has the dove's affections been divided with a rather commonplace little wife, who shows no interest at all in flowers or leaves, and who forced upon him rather more than was fair of the business of hatching. She would absent herself for long hours of a summer day, while he would coo and call in vain.

E. V. B.

Sandpipers and Cat.—A pair of sandpipers who had nested near the brook below our house, brought their two young ones to feed daily in the garden, and early one morning I heard them near the dining-room window making an unusually loud noise. On looking out I saw, to my surprise, the two parent birds walking in an angry manner within two feet of the cat, who, evidently frightened, was going towards the front door; they did not seem at all afraid of the cat, and were, I presume, protecting the young birds from her.

Belmont, Bolton-le-Moors. GRACE DEAKIN.

Late Singing of Blackbirds and Thrushes.—The blackbirds and thrushes have been singing much later than usual this year in our neighbourhood. I heard one so late as July 28. Can any of your readers say if this has been the case everywhere?

Belmont, Bolton-le-Moors. GRACE DEAKIN.

A Lark Query.—I am anxious to discover exactly how far larks are useful in destroying the insects that are destructive to crops, and in order to do this cor-

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* Cushat is Scotch for wood-pigeon or dove.

rectly, am trying to identify the various insects found in the crops of the birds. I am not aware that anyone has yet named the different *species* found to have been eaten by birds. Ornithological writers content themselves by mentioning insects in general terms, *i.e.*, beetles, spiders, grubs, larvæ and other indefinite titles, in speaking of the food of birds; but I wish to be able to name them individually. If any entomologist would lend me his aid, or tell me where I could procure this information, I should be most grateful, and they would be helping to advance a somewhat neglected branch of ornithology.

South Croydon. F. A. FULCHER.

A Field Name (p. 196).—The name beginning with "q" is "quillet," but a quillet is hardly what we should call *a field*, it is rather a strip of land (originally a furlong in length, *i.e.*, the length of a standard furrow) marked off from similar strips lying in the same large field by mere-stones, or a narrow strip of unploughed land. It was usually employed in dividing up a tract of reclaimed or enclosed land among the freeholders of a manor—each freeholder getting one or more strips; and it takes us back to the days when the arable land of the manor was tilled in common by the freeholders. Thus all the land for about 400 yards, lying to the east of the Great Meols station bridge, and on either side of the line, was reclaimed from the marsh at a comparatively recent date, probably about 1480, and it was cut up into long strips, and some of the dividing mere-stones are still to be seen lying in the fields. All this land is still called quillets.

West Kirby. M. SYBILLA DALGLISH.

A Dormant Squirrel.—Two young ladies in our neighbourhood had a tame squirrel, which in the course of the winter—I think in February—went to sleep in its nest in the cage, as squirrels are very apt to do for a few hours in the day. However, it remained asleep (dormouse fashion) through the spring, and some time towards the end of May they took a peep at it. They found it curled up and stiff, and proceeded to bury it. I suspect it was buried alive, and that it was really in a condition of torpor like that of the dormouse in winter, which, till it is awoke by warmth, is as stiff and hard as a stone. It could not in any case have been dead more than two or three days, as the body was still fresh, so that the fact remains that it must have been asleep for two or three months. This I have never known of any other squirrel, and should be glad to have light thrown upon it.

Taplow. L. SHORE.

Swallows.—My mother tells me of the following instance of a swallow returning to build its nest in the same spot, which must have occurred some seventy years ago. At the house where she lived in Herefordshire as a child, the swallows used to build under the eaves outside the nursery window. On one occasion a long hair had become fastened in one of the mud pellets of which the nest was formed. Looking out one morning, the head nurse found a swallow hanging by the hair which had become twisted round the bird's leg, which was broken. Cutting down the sufferer, the nurse repaired the mischief as well as she could by amputating the limb some way up. She then let the bird go, which, in due course, went to pass the winter in some warm climate. The following spring, on the return of the swallows, the same bird, minus half a leg, was found to build her nest in the same place.

Clifton, Bristol. GILES A. DAUBENY.

A Friendly Drake (p. 195).—That the drake is a bird of intelligence and also of an affectionate disposition I can well believe. Some years ago, when digging in my garden, I was greatly amused at the behaviour of a drake belonging to a neighbour. The poor bird had been gobbling up all the worms which I had turned up, and was in the midst of its feast, when a thought seemed to strike it, and turning away it waddled off a considerable distance, and returned with its mate, to whom it appeared to offer a share in the rich repast.

Fyfield, Abingdon. W. H. WARNER.

Communities of Pigs (p. 196).—Mr. Powell will find this subject alluded to in Gilpin's *Forest Scenery*. The author, however, does not speak of Sicilian, but of New Forest swine.

Fyfield, Abingdon. W. H. WARNER.

Why does he do it?—There is a parrot in this house which I have known for twenty-five years; a very clever and amusing old fellow he is. Every morning after his breakfast, and during our own, he takes a walk about the dining-room, and occasionally—not always—he stops on the edge of the carpet, rubs his beak, as if pecking at it very gently a few times, and then with his beak resting on the carpet like a sleeping apteryx, and turning round to right or left alternately, he scratches two or three times slowly with one leg, and several times rapidly with the other, which operation he repeats several times with perfect gravity. Can you or your readers tell me what he is about? Is it merely to stretch his legs, or is he thinking of building a nest, or is it merely to make us laugh or wonder? Does he think the carpet a flower-bed, or the edge of it a sandy beach, which it resembles in colour, and want to get at some roots or insects, or why is it? I can think of no good solution to explain this extraordinary conduct. He is certainly not a lunatic nor an idiot, for his conduct in all other respects is most rational, and his observations often most pertinent. Can it be accounted for in any rational way? G. D.

Lemmings (p. 198).—When crossing many of the higher table-lands in Norway this year, I was surprised at the large number of these pretty little animals. The guides and natives look upon them with about as much respect as we do rats, killing them whenever one crosses their path—a mere blow with a stick will do it. They cannot run very quickly, hence one is upon them, in most cases, before they have a chance of escape. They then hold up their heads in a defying, savage way, and squeak their loudest. They are most interesting little animals when watched in their native state. The reindeer are said to strike them with their feet, and to rip open the abdomen so as to get the vegetable food present in the guts. E. PRATT.

A September Cuckoo.—While busy in my garden on September 12, I suddenly heard "Cuckoo" called very loud and clear. Scarcely believing my own ears, I stood listening while the bird called ten or twelve times, finishing with a stammering "Cuck-cuck-oo." The voice came from some high trees near where the old birds constantly came in the summer. I have made inquiries, and have found one person beside myself who heard it, and from the same position. Is it not a very unusual circumstance, and would it not be a late-bred young bird?
Haslemere. A. C. H.

Terrier catching Fish.—While living in Herefordshire, we once showed a Welsh terrier a perch swimming in a small pond at the end of the lawn. After that he could with difficulty be got away from the water as long as daylight lasted during the summer months. He would stand for hours up to his middle, perfectly motionless, seeming to exercise some sort of fascination over the fish, which came in twos and threes right under his nose. A quick grab usually resulted in one being caught, which he brought to the bank and played with until it was exhausted. The largest number taken in one day was five. They were always thrown back into the water, and swam off apparently none the worse for the unusual way in which they were caught. Another curious fact in connection with this was that on moving away to another house where there was no pond, the dog for some time persisted in standing with his head over any watering pot he could find.
Clifton. K. T. BIGGS.

A Cat's Antipathies (p. 199). I have a Persian cat just two years old, a very beautiful creature; she makes friends with some people and shows curious dislikes to others. There is, for instance, a waiter who comes to me at times, and when he is in the house she can scarcely be persuaded to go near the kitchen, and at one time would jump upon me and put her paws round my neck, hiding her face in terror when he happened to be near. Lately I have remarked more confidence, and I feel sure the man in question would in no way hurt her. He may have frightened her once when she first saw him. I believe a high-bred Persian has very perceptive instincts, and I am often struck with the silent taste shown by my pet. T. A. G.

Sympathetic Gulls.—I am writing from a primitive little place on the Cumberland coast, the house we are in being almost on the shore, which is

frequented, from early morning till often after sundown, by numbers of sea birds, chiefly gulls. When first we came they were quite unconcerned at our neighbourhood, and we had the pleasure of watching them from quite close, until a visitor —to whom, I suppose, this appeared but "poor sport"—shot a few of them. Two or three mornings after this I was awakened very early by a perfect babel of bird voices, and on rising to look what was going on, I saw a multitude of sea gulls hovering and sweeping in short circles over something on the sand, but so closely were they clustered that I could not see what. Presently one gull left the fluttering group and sped away, to return a few minutes later with another, on which, the cluster dividing, I saw it had been gathered about a dead comrade. The bird that had, as I judge, been fetched, alighted beside the body, seemed to look at it for a moment or two, and then rose to hover round it, uttering strange, mournful little cries; while the others, no longer on the wing, seemed to watch in sympathy. Soon all took flight but the mourning bird, that still swept round and round crying shrilly. At length it, too, winged away, but not entirely before it twice returned, after what had seemed a final leavetaking of its dead, hovering and plaining in the same way above it. Ere long the "creeping" tide had covered it. V. C.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Index.—If the lady who has undertaken the Index for the present volume will forward her address (which we have mislaid) we will forward an advance copy of the December number to be included in the same.

R. H. L.—The explanation arrived too late for insertion in the September number, and it did not seem worth while to reopen the matter.

H. N. M. and J. M.—We hope to publish the notes soon.

F. C.—(1) *Brachythecium rutabulum.* (2) *Hylocomium squarrosum.* (3) *Bryum capillare.* (4) *Hypnum purum.*

G. D.—Such variation is not uncommon.

Apprentice.—(1) Cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*). (2) *Thuidium tamariscinum.* (3) *Festuca rigida.* The book you name is useful, but Hooker's *Student's Flora* (Macmillan, 10s. 6d.) is much better, although more technical.

M. J. T.—The lichen is a *Collema;* the fungus a *Clavaria,* probably *C. fasciculata.* The *Guide to British Fungi,* recommended in NATURE NOTES for 1893, p. 188, is the cheapest introduction.

J. L. B.—(1) Yes, probably, but the slide is very bad. (2) Yes. (3) *Cecidomyia Ulmariæ.* (4) The red bladder-like galls are made by a saw-fly, *Nematus gallicola.*

E. G.—Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium Ossifragum*). You will find suitable books recommended in NATURE NOTES from time to time, *e.g.*, Mr. Jameson's "Illustrated Guide to British Mosses," is noticed in NATURE NOTES for 1893, p. 214; Mr. W. G. Smith's "Guide to British Fungi," in the same volume, p. 188; Dr. Cooke's "British Freshwater Algæ" (Kegan Paul, 5s.), will probably meet your requirements under this head.

C. M. M.—We are obliged to exclude lists, owing to the increasing demand upon our space.

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Appeal from the Council.—It must be gratifying to all Selbornians to note that the Council's 'Appeal to the Women of Great Britain to refrain from wearing feathers taken from birds killed for their plumage,' has been very favourably noticed by the leading daily papers. As an instance of this *The Daily Telegraph* (October 12) devoted a leading article of over a column in length to this subject. The Council would earnestly urge upon members of the Society, the desirability of calling the attention of their local press to this question, and for this purpose a copy of the Society's Appeal will be sent free (on application to the Secretary) to all who will make use of it in this way.

Leaflet Fund.—The Committee having charge of this Fund gratefully acknowledge the receipt of 9s. 6d. from Miss Martelli (Northern Heights Branch), and 1s. from Miss Emily Scott. Further contributions are urgently desired.

Selborne Library.—The Council have to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, from Mr. F. A. Hort, and *Nature as a Book of Symbols*, from an anonymous friend, for the library.

The Hon. Secretary of the Croydon Branch (Mr. E. A. Martin) has kindly undertaken to compile a complete list of the various editions of Gilbert White's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*. Members and friends having copies are requested to send full particulars to the above-named at 21, Carew Road, Thornton Heath, as this must be the first step towards the formation of a Bibliography.

Winter Session Lectures.—The following two well-known gentlemen have kindly permitted the Society to add their names to the list of lecturers published in the October issue: Colonel W. L. B. Coulson, Newbrough, Fourstones-on-Tyne; and James Saunders, Esq., 49, Rothesay Road, Luton.

The Hon. Secretary of the Croydon Branch (Mr. E. A. Martin) delivered his popular lecture on "Gilbert White and the Village of Selborne," at St. Mary's Schools, Wyndham Street, W., on October 19, the Rev. R. Wakefield in the chair. Much interest was exhibited in the work and objects of the Selborne Society.

Council and Committee Meetings.—The next meetings of the Council will be held on November 6 and December 4; those of the Magazine and Leaflet Committee on November 21 and December 19.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Clapton (Lower Lea Valley).—This Branch held their concluding Field Club Meeting on Saturday, September 29, at Woodford, when the Hon. Sec., Mr. R. Marshman Wattson, was the recipient of a very pleasant recognition of his services in so successfully arranging and carrying out the Rambles of the Club during the past two Sessions. The Hon. Secretary, in returning thanks for the gift, said that he hoped next year the rambles, as they became better known, would prove even more successful and profitable.

Social Evenings.—In connection with the same Club, arrangements have been made to hold social evenings throughout the winter, at which papers will be read, interspersed with vocal and instrumental music. Though primarily for members of the Branch, a limited number of invitations will be issued. Full particulars may be obtained of the Hon. Secretary, 14, Narford Road, Upper Clapton.

New Havant Branch.—The Council approved the formation of a Branch at Havant at their last meeting. The Hon. Secretary is Capt. J. H. Chippindall-Healey, Old Mill House, Bedhampton, near Havant.

Notices for this page must be received not later than November 15, to appear in the December issue.

Nature Notes:

The Selborne Society's Magazine.

No. 60. DECEMBER, 1894. Vol. V.

THE NEW WILD BIRDS' PROTECTION ACT.

A VERY important document was referred last month by the Cumberland and Cheshire County Council meetings to their Committees. It was a letter from the Secretary of State, calling attention to the fact that in some parts of the kingdom the Wild Birds' Protection Act (1880-1) had failed to fulfil the intent of the Legislature, and that in consequence the attention of the County Council must be drawn to a new Act, the Wild Birds' Protection Act of 1894 (57, 58 Vic. cap. 24), which became law in July last, and the responsibility of putting which Act into force lay now on the County Councils. The County Council, if it chose to do so, could henceforth move the Secretary of State to grant an order to allow it to become the law of the land in any area within the County Council jurisdiction.

Those of us who knew the Wild Birds' Protection Act of 1880-1 felt it was doomed to failure. Its schedule of the wild birds that needed protection was not complete. It only gave a close time from March 1 to August 1, which was at least a fortnight too short at either end. It did not forbid nest destroying or egg stealing, except in the cases of certain game birds.

But this new Act to amend the former gives for the future complete protection to our feathered friends, if the County Council so wish it. For the first time the taking of the nests and eggs of the ordinary wild birds of our land can be made penal. Henceforth any person who shall in a forbidden area take or destroy, or incite any other person to take or destroy: (*a*) the eggs of any wild birds within any area specified in the order; (*b*) the eggs of any species of wild birds named in the

order, shall, on conviction before any two Justices of the Peace, pay for every egg so taken or destroyed, a sum not exceeding one pound.

Henceforth the Secretary of State, to quote the words of the Act, moved thereto by the Council of any administrative county, may prohibit: (1) the taking or destroying of wild birds' eggs in any year or years in any place or places within that county; or (2) the taking or destroying the eggs of any specified kind of wild bird within that county or part or parts thereof, as recommended by the said County Council and set forth in the said order; (3) the application of the County Council shall specify the limits of the place or places or otherwise, the particular species of wild birds to which it is proposed that any prohibition in the order is to apply, and shall set forth the reasons on account of which the application is made.

As regards due notice, the public will be warned three weeks before the coming into operation of the Act in any locality, by advertisement in local papers and by public notices. As regards the cost of working the Act, this will be looked upon as an expense for general county purposes within the meaning of the Local Government Act, 1888.

Henceforward, then, if the County Council will it, the glory of rural England, its varied bird life, will be preserved. And though it has come too late to preserve many species, at least it may be in time to save twenty-two kinds of wild birds that are in jeopardy from passing away from among us.

It is not only that the bright winged birds, such as that emerald of the brook, the kingfisher, may again delight all who will not grudge him a few minnows and a little trout spawn, and a great many freshwater snails, or that again the green and ruby of the woodpecker may flash by us in the woodland, that one pleads the importance of this Act. It is not only that our heavens may be filled with the song of the lark, the pipe of the curlew, the hooting of the owl, the cry of the plover, and our eyes once again marvel at the flight of the falcon and stoop of the merlin, that one urges attention to it. It is that before it is too late, the Government has now placed it in the hands of County Councils to help the agriculturist, by enacting that the balance of nature shall be restored, and the farmer's friends, the white owl and the kestrel, the rook, and even the starling, the much abused green linnet and chaffinch, and the fisherman's friends, the herring-gull and kittywake, shall not cease from their beneficent labours in the land.

It is high time that this balance should be restored, if we do not want all the plagues of Egypt to be poured out in wrath upon us—if that exceeding great army the caterpillar, and the cankerworm, and that victorious host the vole, the rat, the mouse, and such small deer, are not to have it all their own way. The cry of "Save us from the vole!" in Scotland, is echoed by the cry in Lincolnshire, "Save us from the rat!"

and in some parts of Shropshire at this moment, the houses of the gentry and the farm-yards of the farmer, are plagued beyond endurance. The owl and the kestrel have been ruthlessly slain in absolute ignorance of their feeding habits by the gamekeepers, and their destruction has been terribly revenged upon us.

From the coast comes the same bitter complaint of destruction of the great scavengers of our ports and harbours, the gulls. Feathers, we are told in the milliners' papers, "are all the vogue, and are to rival fur this year." And to supply feathers, cowards are gunning all round the coast and slaying ruthlessly the very birds that the herring fisher wants to point his eyes to the herring-school, the very birds that the sanitary authorities want to keep their harbours sweet, and that the ploughman by the seaboard desires for his companion, to clear the new-turned glebe from slugs and worms. There would then seem to be need for us to make use of the Act that has been just passed, and need for the County Councils of England to avail themselves of all the help that experts can give them in scheduling the birds whose nests and eggs they think require the protection of the strong right arm of the law.

It is at the nesting season that our friends the birds most mightily come to the help of man. It has been calculated after close observation, that a sparrow feeds its young thirty-six times an hour; a red-start, twenty-three times in the hour; a chaffinch, thirty-five times, mostly with green caterpillars; a titmouse, sixteen times. A single pair of starlings will get rid of more than twelve thousand larvæ in four months. Almost all small birds eat one-sixth of their own weight in twenty-four hours. Their food is largely composed of our secret enemies.

As for the rooks, *pace per contra* a gentleman who applied the other day to the Westmoreland County Council and asked them for legal advice on the question of the destruction of rooks; who in fact sought their help to defend his farm from the incursions of his neighbour's rookery, and who stated that he thought they did his ripe corn ten shillings of damage daily; it may be enough to state in their behalf, that they are the farmer's surest ally against the wireworm, and that if they can get grubs they won't take grain. Over and over again they have been shot upon fields of newly sown wheat, and their crops when examined have been shown to be filled with grubs and wireworms, and no seed has been found in them; indeed it has been computed that a rookery of ten thousand birds devours upwards of two hundred tons of cockchafer grubs and wireworms in the breeding season.

The rook has his faults: he is untidy; sometimes in pulling out a good fat wireworm he pulls up a blade of wheat; sometimes in pulling up "tormentil" he roots up grass also; he got very thirsty in one of the dry seasons a few years back and took to egg-stealing; and he has in some parts of England

transmitted his liking for egg-flip to his children: but he has never condescended, so far as I can learn, to the meanness of hypocrisy, and if he goes into a cornfield to seek for slugs and cockchafer grubs and wireworms, he does not abuse the trust reposed in him, and steal the corn.

But all this is beside the point; one has to urge that an Act for the preservation of Great Britain's friends—the birds—has been passed; and that if the beauty and the joy and the use of bird life perish from our midst, the County Councils will have in future to bear the blame.

H. D. Rawnsley.

A BIRD-LOVED SUBURB.

(*Concluded from page* 205.)

THE nightingales, on their arrival, are most likely to be first heard at the western edge of Sidmouth Wood, in which nightingales are often so plentiful that the wood might well be called nightingale-grove. Here I have often heard nightingales singing very beautifully in the daytime, sometimes in emulative contest. One showery morning, when warm rain was falling, I stood for a while sheltered from a sharp shower, under a tree; whereupon, almost close to my ear there burst forth a glorious song from a nightingale. By-and-by there broke out a fainter song from a more distant bird; and the two went on singing in seeming rivalry, gradually drawing nearer and nearer to each other, till, at last, one of the two nightingales flew out close to my head. In the prettily named Nightingale Lane, which leads down the hill to Buccleuch House, I have never heard the song of the nightingale, but it is often to be heard by day in the thickets — lately threatened by the Philistines with destruction—a little nearer to Petersham. Therefrom it may often be heard, pealing gloriously right across the Petersham meadows.

In the lower estuary of the river, I have seen much of the Thames life of nightingales, and become quite familiar with their habits. There they come over in large numbers at their earliest arrival; there I have found their nests, and seen their pretty eggs, of uniform and continuous olive tinged colour. Much like the robin, in perching and feeding, is the nightingale; much like the robinets are the young nightingales, in the plain speckle of their first plumage. The place in Sidmouth Wood where the nightingale is most likely to be seen is the transverse glade, upon the grass of which glade it may be now and then seen to hop, robin-like, to pick up a small worm. There, perhaps, some may have seen the bird without knowing what it was.

A skill in finding birds' nests is gained in boyhood alone, and when thus fully acquired it never afterwards leaves its possessor; so that, knowing the habits of birds, and their times and places of nesting, he readily catches sight of nests, wherever he wanders, as a matter of course, and just as easily as he discerns the flowers of the field. Thus have I seen nests by scores—in Kew Gardens, in Richmond Park and its suburbs, and in the lovely Terrace Garden—and it is not difficult to guess, without even looking into the nest, whether it contains egg or fledgeling, and just as surely can one discern turtle, or cushat, or nightingale.

In watching birds, too, there is a habit that is acquired, first in boyish days, and goes on increasing, by which best to secure their confidence and get them to learn to look on you as a friend. Such have I everywhere got to find them: and such confidence I trust I may ever retain.

The bird whose form and voice we hail most readily after the fogs and storms of winter, is perhaps that "thrice-welcome darling of the spring," the cuckoo. Cuckoos come in large numbers to Richmond; and some of the earliest make their appearance close to the river, in the trees of Cambridge Park, just opposite my own garden. For many years I have been in the habit of looking out for the earliest arrival of our spring migrants, and noting the date at which I first heard the cuckoo. Many times I have heard its voice first, unexpectedly, across the river from Cambridge Park; at other times when I have been looking out for the bird's arrival, I have heard and seen it first at the edge of Isabella Wood, where it seems to enter Richmond Park. A cuckoo's egg I have seen but once in Richmond, and that was one spring in our own garden. The cuckoos had been unusually numerous in Cambridge Park that spring, and had often flown across the river to the Surrey side. And that year it happened that a pair of robins, which had reared a brood the previous year in a box in our garden, had built their nest in one of the boxes, and had there laid two eggs. But on looking in one morning, I saw a similar egg, though a little bit larger, lying close beside the other two. Up to that time, I had only seen a cuckoo's egg when laid beside the "eggs of heavenly blue" of the hedge-warbler, where it was clearly to be recognised. And the hole in the box was much too small for a cuckoo ever to get through. This, however, *was* a cuckoo's egg, which must have been brought and placed there by the cuckoo's beak. It would have been interesting to note the hatching of the young cuckoo, and watch its sad behaviour towards its nest-mates; but whether the robins had ever been deceived before or not I cannot say; anyhow, they forsook this nest, and went off and built a nest and reared their brood in another box. The excellent collection in the fine Natural History Museum at South Kensington enabled me to settle such a question as this by seeing there a cuckoo's egg lying beside robin's eggs in a robin's own nest.

All the varieties of what we generally call swallows are plentiful in Richmond; their motions, and the several dates of their arrival, down to the latest comers, the magnificent swifts, are noteworthy and full of interest. The sand-martins have their lively colonies here; the chimney-swallows and house-martins return to their old sites; the glorious swifts breed in their not easily discoverable holes: and all the kinds may be seen hawking for flies together over the ponds and the river, or heard singing on some quiet tree their sweet but little known song:—

"Arguta lacus circumvolitavit hirundo."

After sunset, in the evening gloaming, it is pleasant to watch, from our verandah, the erratic movements of the bats, mingled with the lightning-like career of the swifts, who sometimes utter, close to our ears, their battle-like scream; till, as darkness gathers, the birds and bats seem to melt into the gloom and vanish from sight.

There are many birds, we have to bear in mind, which, though quite common, have never, somehow, obtained the general recognition that is readily accorded to the robin, the lark, the wren, or the cuckoo. But, save in regard to its soft yet sweet song, the swallow is known by every child even, and looked out for, and welcomed; and as with the Greek poet of twenty-four centuries ago, so now, everyone knows enough to say, with Anacreon, of this gentle bird, that

"When Nature wears her summer vest, he comes to weave his simple nest;
And when the chilling winter lowers, again he seeks the genial bowers
Of Memphis or the shores of Nile, where sunny hours of verdure smile."

Some of the summer migrants are best found outside Richmond Park. Priory Lane, which leads from Barnes Common to Roehampton Gate, is the place above all to see and hear the whitethroats and blackcaps; in the precincts of Wimbledon Common we should look for whinchats, stonechats, and such like birds; and the Philistines have not yet wholly deprived Sheen Common of those bird-loved copses which may, it is hoped, be in time partly restored by persistent efforts on the part of the Selborne Society. From Priory Lane we enter Richmond Park where it is crossed by the brook whose name carries us, in imagination, back to the time when the beavers used to form across it their wonderful dams; and their name is preserved by the brook, along with the well-known Yorkshire town of Beverley.

Of the falcon-tribe, the one most frequently seen in Richmond is the graceful kestrel or windhover, whose stationary hoverings in the air, so wonderfully sustained, are truly amazing. Next to the kestrel comes the sparrow-hawk, a proud-looking bird, which we may sometimes see dashing into a startled flock of small birds, and carrying off one in his deadly gripe. Once I was startled by a sparrow-hawk almost rushing against my

head in fierce pursuit of a thrush, when they dashed both together into a thick holly-bush close by, and there they were so closely entangled that I at once caught them, one in each hand. The thrush, a fine black cock with yellow bill, I let go, glad to escape from his deadly pursuer; the bold little hawk, a female, I held for awhile, with some difficulty, and at last let her fly gladly away.

The nest-building of the birds furnishes an object of study that is full of wonder. By watching it day by day, and close at hand, in your own garden, it will seem quite amazing. Those neat nest-builders, the chaffinch, the goldfinch, and such like, are well-known and highly appreciated; but once I had the good fortune to be able to study thoroughly, and at ease, the wonderful skill as a nest-builder of the song-thrush, which, along with the blackbird (itself another thrush) and the skylark, floods English scenes with melody little inferior to the music of the nightingale. Of one of the loveliest songsters of English woods and hedgerows, it was pleasant to be able to note how highly it should rank as an architect in nest-building. As a singer the thrush ranks among the very foremost. On the song-thrush, Tennyson, a lover and a student of birds, wrote, in the latest years of his long life, a truly remarkable poem, of which three-fourths represent, in a wonderful nearness of structure, the words that denote the several snatches of the bird's bursts of melody, while the remaining fourth records the comment on each strain by the poet. Here is one of the stanzas:—

"'Summer is coming, summer is coming: I know it, I know it, I know it;
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again!' Yes, my wild little poet."

Various theories have been proposed to account for the main motives of the songs of birds. Some attribute them wholly to emotions of love, and dwell upon them as the language of courtship and affection; others to hilarity and joy; and others, again, to rivalry or defiance; but perhaps it would be best to note in the songs a mixture of all these emotions. In regard to this subject, a small matter occurred in our own garden. Of a pair of robins, which had long built every year in one of our nest-boxes, the female was, after a hard winter, observed to be ailing; she could scarcely eat or move about, and when I took her into my hand she hardly cared to get away. The male bird had always been so attentive to his consort, that his love seemed to be of the kind sung of by Ovid:—

"Hanc cupit, hanc optat, sola suspirit in illa;
Signaque dat nutu, sollicitatque notis."

And now he tried to tempt her with crumbs, a bit of meat, or a worm; but, alas, she pined away and died. Then, for a week, the male went around singing rapturously, almost without pause, the whole day long. This seemed to be to find and coax a sweetheart, and when he had thus secured another wife, the pair soon built a nest in one of our boxes, and reared there a nice

little brood. At ordinary times this robin used to sing his best when challenged by a rapturous little singer of our own, a goldfinch-canary mule, who liked to show how he could outsing the robin. They would answer each other and, in rivalry, strain their little throats to the utmost. This bird of mine was so tame that he would hop or fly about the garden, and go quietly into his cage again, and sing a soft little song, surpassingly sweet, as he was taken in to roost. By-and-by, however, through old age or weakness, this sweet songster died, and was buried at the bottom of the garden with a poetic epitaph.

A love for Nature may be cherished best of all, perhaps, when it is wholly free from the desire to take the life of bird, or fish, or insect. The great American nuturalist, Thoreau, believes that no humane being past the thoughtless age of boyhood, would ever wish to destroy any creature that holds its life by the same tenure wherewith he holds his own. Ruskin wisely urges everyone to cultivate perfect sympathy with every living thing around him; and in one of the rules of his Society of St. George, he makes the members promise to neither kill nor hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but to strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty upon the earth. This view has grown with me from boyhood, and still grows with increasing strength. The truest lovers of Nature are quite content to watch and observe, without the slightest wish to kill; they thus secure the fullest confidence and harmony with all living creatures, and they are quite ready to endure the contempt that is poured out upon them by the lovers of sport as fadmongers. A Burns can feel sympathy with a wounded hare, and awaken universal pity for a field-mouse whose "wee bit housie" has been laid in ruins by his ploughshare; and a Thoreau moves a mother's heart by truly asserting that in its extremity the hare cries like a child. We may well take to heart the lesson given by Wordsworth:—

> "Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

To a man who can take an interest in pursuits such as are here noted, they will form a perennial delight, ever varying, and never found to fail. In whatever situation he may be placed, whatever may be his vocation, these studies will always furnish companionship for his daily walks; and the very remembrance of them will in hours of solitude prove a truly delightful solace. Even London, in its dreariest days, is rendered more than tolerable by the recollection of what he has many a time seen and heard, and hopefully enjoyable by the thought of what may be expected in days to come. To one such lover of Nature it happened once, some fourteen years ago, that on a well remembered Tuesday, often cited as "Black Tuesday," when London had been unexpectedly buried, like a city of the dead, beneath the fall from an appalling snowstorm, and eminent travellers

had been engulfed all night in trains passing in and out of Oxford, he had to walk at night four miles due westward, from office to home, along the great western highway (a walk more trying than he had found an alpine pass). Even then, when floundering from snow-drifts in road, where vehicles abandoned were nearly buried, to the footpaths inside Hyde Park, in hopes of finding there drifts of less depth and difficulty, he could recall, as in the dim light he struggled on, the brighter times when he had heard such and such a songster, or caught sight of such and such a nest, and he was cheered and rendered hopeful by the remembrance. And when, at last, on reaching home, he had to shovel a path to the door, and have his boots almost cut from his feet, it was pleasant to be able to forget the difficulties of the walk in recollections such as had cheered and encouraged him in its course.

The man that has the tastes whereof I write, may abundantly gratify them wherever he may be placed, even in London; but he can especially cultivate such pursuits, and find in them never-ending delights, if he but set out in the right way, in a district so rich in everything that pertains to the sights and sounds of rural life, especially of bird-life, as the one that lies around Richmond.

Richmond-on-Thames. W. J. C. Miller.

FLORIDA INSECT PESTS.

FROM the few notes that have already been published in this magazine, the reader might conclude that Florida, the land of flowers, with its gaudy butterflies, bright coloured songsters, and luxuriant hammock-land, was a perfect heaven upon earth. Such, however, is not by any means the case. The sub-tropical beauty of birds and vegetation is indeed unbounded, but there are serious drawbacks in the shape of most noxious tropical insects. The wooden houses are built on piles, and under them the sand is infested with "jigger-fleas." All dogs are attacked by them, and fowls and puppies frequently killed; in fact, sitting hens must regularly have their combs covered with a mixture of lard and brimstone, and insect powder dusted under their wings, to keep them alive. These jiggers are very tiny and black; they do not hop like old world fleas, but, fixing themselves into the flesh, stick there and are most difficult to remove. An English visitor who has once collected eggs in a Florida hen-house, on a hot June day, will for ever remember the result. Worse than these are the "red bugs" (everything in America is a bug or a worm). They swarm in the wet sand on lake shores or in hammocks, and burrowing under the skin, after the habit of our harvest bugs,

cause their victims trouble almost beyond endurance. It is a hopeless task trying to describe the torture inflicted by the clouds of mosquitoes all over the country. I am quite aware that in some parts the people flatter themselves they are without this plague, but our experience was that in such districts they merely came in fewer numbers; the "gallynippers" (mammoth mosquitoes, twice as blood-thirsty and vicious in their habits) generally supplying any deficiency.

The coloured people particularly are troubled with "tetter-worm," through walking, they say, barefoot in the morning dew. This horrible thing—I am not very clear as to what it really is—burrows a path for itself just under the skin, very much as a leaf-minor does in a leaf. The track of the creature can be thus traced all about the foot; it is most difficult to kill and very painful, even dangerous, as if neglected it causes the flesh to slough, and much mischief to ensue.

Of the scorpions, bloodsuckers, sand flies, ticks, and gnats, the less said the better, but oh, the horse flies! in some cases more than an inch long. Cows, horses, and mules have a wretched time, especially in the summer, when they are eaten alive, and come home with the blood running down them. When driving we used to spend all our time killing these soft, fat-bodied insects, which die at the least touch—in fact the commonest kind never seem, in any case, to live more than twenty-four hours, and those which come into the houses are always dead next morning. Their sting is really painful. I remember one day, when walking through the flat woods, suddenly feeling something like a pin running into my arm, and on looking down found it to be an extra big horse-fly. The arm was most tender for days after, feeling as though badly bruised, and was so much swollen as to make it quite a difficult matter drawing any sleeve over it. The "coachman fly" is said to feed on these horse-flies, and in order to catch them, will sit through a whole drive on the collar or some other part of the harness, or even on the steed itself, in order to pounce on the insects as they settle; the curious thing being that the horses seem to know the difference, for directly a horse-fly comes, even if it does not sting, they become restless, tossing their heads, and lashing with their tails, but the "coachman" may rest on any part of them, for any length of time, and never be interfered with or driven off.

The insects which attack crops are far more serious. The variety of grasshoppers and locusts is enormous, their colouring is vivid, and they do endless harm, the palmer-worms even more so than the perfect insects. A brown and green grasshopper, about two inches long, is the most destructive to orange trees, while the "soldier-bug"—a huge scarlet and yellow locust—devotes all his energies to devouring flowers and vegetables. The "katydids" are a lovely green colour, with wing-cases exactly like the young orange leaves, from which it is almost impossible to distinguish them. The tomato crops have also to

contend with many enemies, the most troublesome being the "tomato-worm,"* a smooth brown caterpillar, not unlike those on English cabbages, which, burying themselves in the fruit, eat away all the inside, leaving nothing but the skin. Another "tomato worm" is the long green larva of the "tomato moth." The perfect insect (a sphinx) is large and handsome, with a proboscis three times the length of the entire insect. The general colour is shades of brown and grey, the body being marked with transverse pink or yellow bands. It is curious why the tint of these markings should so vary, it may be the difference in sex, or a second variety of the female as occurs in the orange dog butterfly. The "cut-worm" is a most remarkable pest, attacking all young vegetables throughout the state. It also is a caterpillar, but unlike the generality, it buries in the ground, only eating at night, and even then merely seeming to bite through the stalks of young plants just where they leave the earth. Sometimes in the morning it is quite a distressing thing to see line after line of promising young shoots cut through and withering on the ground.

This is not the place to enlarge upon the rattle-snakes, cobras, and other familiar reptiles; indeed, I may have already given an unfair impression of a country which is more than fascinating, and a life of which we certainly would never have tired.

W. M. E. F.

BEES AND WASPS IN THE PUNJAB.

MR. LAMBERT BARLOW, to whom I was indebted for the notes on the "Winter Flight of Cranes in the Punjab,"† has since furnished me with some interesting facts about bees and wasps in that country.

In the Punjab and in Cashmere adjoining, there are several species of native bees, but the farmers of the country, who are the chief bee-keepers, have domesticated only one species which I gather does not differ in any essential particulars from our own ordinary honey bee (*Apis mellifica*). The value of this bee has been recognised in the Punjab from time immemorial, where it is known under the native name of "shahud-ki-mukhi," or honey fly. By some it is called "madhu mukhi," the word "shahud" being the Persian for honey, which in Sanskrit is represented by the word "madhu." In some districts this bee goes by the name of "mom mukhi" or wax fly, this word being also of Sanskrit extraction. The rajahs of the country in days gone by did

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* *Tomato* should be pronounced like *potato*.

† NATURE NOTES, 1894, p. 86.

all in their power to encourage bee culture, and it is said that they went so far as to diminish the tax on land to those farmers who undertook to rear and protect these insects. Thomas Wildman in his work on Bees, published in this country in 1768, quotes at page 14 of his preface the forcible language of M. Feydan de Brou, and one can imagine similar advice given by those rajahs to their farmers :—

"The culture of bees is a branch of rural economy, the more valuable as it is within the reach of the poorest cottager. It requires not plowing, manure, cattle, nor rich meadows; the whole that is wanted is an attendance which may be given by the meanest, and that but for a short time. In this respect it is really reaping without sowing."

The method of hiving bees, as practised by these Punjab farmers, is still of the most primitive nature, but on the whole they appear to be very successful in the amount of honey they secure. It will not be without interest if I give an account of the structure of their hives, and some few details about their methods of honey-taking.

The hives are cylindrical in form, the length being, on an average, twenty-two inches, and the diameter fourteen inches. They are really built into the wall of their huts, and placed at a slope towards the outside. At the base, and continuing for about midway there is a small tube fixed, which is about one-third of an inch in diameter. This tube is made in clay mortar. The whole of the inside of this domestic hive is smeared with moist clay, and at either end is closed by a round platter of red pottery which is built in flush with the wall inside and out, the inner platter being only slightly attached so as to be removable at pleasure; the outer platter is pierced by a round hole to correspond with the tube, and both platters are more or less convex. In some cottages there are two or three of these hives. The natives assert that the bees appreciate this round form of habitation, for there is no waste of room for storage. In the winter, moreover, they are well preserved from the cold, and in the summer they are well screened from the sun by the trees surrounding the hut, while they are at all times secure from storms of wind and rain.

In the months of April and October the honey is extracted from the hives, and here it is, as Mr. Barlow explains, that for want of skill many hives of bees fall a sacrifice to the rude method of removing the combs, and frequently also to the greed of the farmer in taking away as much honey as he can extract. The farmer does this by slightly tapping the inner platter with his sickle or "darauti," which is soon disengaged from the wall; he then places some straw on a dish containing burning charcoal, and holding it near to the hive blows the smoke on to the bees, who very soon disperse. He then cuts away the nearest combs with his sickle, and if he is experienced as well as humane, he will generally leave sufficient so as not to impoverish the bees.

It will be readily understood from these remarks that these farmers have not yet any idea of what is known by us as "artificial "swarming; they, indeed, leave everything as far as possible to Nature. When they swarm they follow the bees until they settle, and then hastily searching for the queen bee they clip her wings, place her in a "chatty" or earthenware pot smeared with honey, when the whole swarm speedily collect round their queen and they are conveyed back to the hive. As a rule the people have no particular attachment to their bees, as with us, but seem to dread them at all times, and never venture to approach them whilst swarming unless protected by a blanket.

It sometimes happens that the swarms proceed to great distances from their home, and as this occurs mostly in the day time when the farmers are away in their fields, they have some difficulty in tracing the whereabouts of their bees. In such a case recourse is made to a man termed a "beehunter"; there are generally one or two of these experts in a village, who almost invariably discover and bring back the swarm. These men are, from long practice, very skilful in finding out the positions in the jungle of the wild bees. They take with them three slender sticks and a small earthernware cup called a "tohee," in which is contained a mixture of sugar or honey and water. Thus equipped they look out for a spot where there may be a spring of water, or some damp ground, for it is well known that bees frequent such places to obtain water to work up their several materials, such as combs, honey, &c. Here arrived they set up a tripod out of the three sticks and place the tohee upon it, sit down and wait patiently for bees.

It is not long before, from their strong sense of smell, the bees alight on the tohee. The man permits a few to relish the nectar and depart, keeping a good look out for the direction they take. He then captures two or three and appends to their waists a piece of thin cotton thread, by which he is the better able to follow their flight through the jungles, and come upon the combs. One Esah Khan was well known to Mr. Thomas Barlow as highly skilful in hunting for bees, and never failed in tracing their combs, and obtaining the wild honey for sale.

On the Salt Range in the Punjab, and in the low hills of the Peshawar and Rawal Pindi districts there are several species of bees, large and small, from which wild honey is obtained. Some of the combs are found on the highest trees, others concealed in bushes. The wild honey is preferred to that procured from bees in a domesticated state, the natives being of opinion that the heat of a "domestic hive" robs it of its fragrance and colour. That which is stored by wild bees of the smaller species is held in the highest esteem.

Should the wild bees gather their honey from the "acacia" blossoms, called by the natives the "phoolai" tree, or from the bush known in the vernacular as "vahekur," the value of the honey is vastly enhanced.

This vahekur bush bears a fragrant white flower, the leaves, from which a dye is also made, being of a brilliant green and of an intensely bitter taste. It is much prized by the people, so much so that a couplet in regard to it has been handed down in their traditions. It runs thus:—

"Sāwā kuchchooch kowrā ukké jāyā
Chitta soofaid mittia khundoo jāyā."
TRANSLATION.
"Green as grass, and bitter as the milk plant,
White, white, and sweet as sugar."

In Sanskrit this plant is called "madar," and known to botanists as *Calotropis gigantea*.

As an instance of the value set on this wild honey by the rajahs and chieftains of the country, Mr. John Barlow states that he was once visiting a village on the banks of the Indus, when a Pathan chief who lived on the opposite bank, and was unable from illness to pay his respects in person, despatched a trusted messenger to say that his country provided no good fruit, but it yielded the most fragrant honey from the jungles, and of which he took the liberty of sending four combs. The combs were each attached to the branches of the trees from which they had been taken, and were over a foot in length, and eight inches in depth. The combs were beautifully white, and the honey was the colour of amber, bright and transparent and most delicious in flavour.

It is of this wild honey that the natives make a "shurbut," or sweet beverage mixed with water. In cases of active inflammation, and when blood-letting from the arm is resorted to, the patient is invariably made to drink this "shurbut," but mixed with water as hot as it is possible for him to drink it.

The desire for wild honey is so strong amongst the people, that even the combs of the large bee—a black bee, and known as "boinjee," or "bhramar"—is hunted for in the jungles, but the removal of this honey from the combs is attended with considerable risk, as this kind of bee is very readily irritated, and never forgets or forgives an offender.

Near the small villages of "Noorpur" and "Balleal," there is a cliff known by the name of "Moodhi-walli Drendh"; it is extremely steep, and indeed it may be said to be almost perpendicular. At about midway of its height and far out of reach, hung, some years ago, a huge comb of this species of bee. A farmer in the neighbourhood had long set his eyes upon it, and determined if possible to secure at least some portion of the honey. He was a "crack shot" with the "gholail," or pellet-bow, and taking with him a dish, or "sanak" as it is called, he deposited it immediately under the comb, and then fired off a hard clay pellet so that he might break the comb. This, after a time, he succeeded in doing, and down came the honey drippings into the "sanak." In a few minutes, however, he was surrounded by the bees, who attacked and stung him so

acutely that he hurried in hot haste to the pool at the foot of the hill, and immersed himself in the water, but even then the bees waited until he rose for breath, and pursued their attacks, which were in the end nearly fatal in their effects.

Wild honey is sold in the district at three pounds for a rupee, while eight pounds of domesticated honey can be bought for the same sum. That which is brought to market and conveyed in goats skins from a distance fetches a less price.

Wax is used in the country for putting a facing on elephant's tusks, to prevent the ivory from cracking, and the native females employ it for smoothing down their hair, and as a remedy for chapped hands in winter. It is sold ordinarily at two pounds for the rupee.

I now come to the wasps, and here I must be brief. Of these, as of the bees, there are several species, and one kind is certainly unknown to us in this country, viz., the "rangur." This wasp is parti-coloured, very bright red and yellow, provided with strong mandibles, and armed with a powerful and venomous sting. They are particularly pugnacious, even more so than our "hornets." They build their nests in trees, and when in flight make a peculiar "buzz," which is well known to the natives, who much dread them. The name "rangur" was given to them centuries ago by the Punjabis, to keep in memory a hostile tribe of "Rajpoots," who were originally Hindus, but became Mussulmen, and were most remarkable for their aggressive and vicious character.

It is impossible to enumerate all the species, or to give any details about them, and I shall only therefore describe two other kinds, which are very generally seen. The first is the "mason wasp," which is called in the vernacular the "ghurokia," or one of the household, the word "ghur" meaning a house. It has a bright metallic lustre of blue or green, and makes a separate nest for each egg, the material being of clay worked into a soft pulp. It deposits green caterpillars in the nest for the use of the grubs, closes it, and prepares to build another.

The second is the ordinary "yellow wasp," and is known by the name of "burr," or by some "turbhoorie," and is common in most parts of India. It has been known to select as a place for its nest the eaves of houses, or dark places beneath thatched verandahs, though it also builds below the soil. As winter approaches the poisonous matter in the sting of this wasp loses its power, and this is so well known to the native boys that at that season they seek for their nests that they may enjoy the small pieces of sugar which are found in a crystallised state adhering to them.

The lizards of the country, or common "gecko," seem to have no fear of the sting at any season, for they may often be seen in close proximity to the nests, ready to pounce on a straggler, which they adroitly rush upon and swallow, and again lay in wait for more.

I will conclude this rather long paper with one of the native aphorisms:—"Bees for peace and wasps for war, but we are lovers of peace."

J. F. A. McNAIR.

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS.

NOT specially adapted, it may be said, for the bright time which, as the old carol says, "comes but once a year," are the volumes which we have to notice, and yet their mention now, even if it be brief, is likely to be more useful than at any other period, for "Christmas boxes" have not yet ceased out of the land, and Selbornians are at least as likely as other folk to remember their friends at the festive season. Wherefore, without further preface, we will turn to our shelves, and take down the volumes that await—and in some cases have awaited far too long—our notice.

Here is another issue—the fourth—of Mr. Robinson's beautiful work on *The Wild Garden* (Murray, 12s. 6d.). Now a new edition of Mr. Robinson's books is

WHITE JAPANESE ANEMONE.

no formal repetition of what has already been welcomed by the public. A good novel cannot be improved, and runs through its thousands unaltered; but Mr. Robinson's works, excellent to begin with, steadily advance towards perfection. The last *Wild Garden*, for example, published somewhere about ten years ago, contained 175 pages; the present issue numbers over 300. Not only have the illustrations—and every one who knows any of Mr. Robinson's books knows how beautiful these are—been largely increased, but wood engravings have supplanted the few "process-blocks" which appeared in the last edition, and we are led to anticipate further improvements in future issues.

The term "wild garden," the author tells us, "is applied essentially to the placing of perfectly hardy exotic plants under conditions where they will thrive without further care. Some have thought of it," he adds, "as a garden run wild, or sowing annuals in a muddle, whereas it does not interfere with the regulation flower garden at all." Then, by pen and pencil, Mr. Robinson proceeds to exemplify his meaning. Two of the cuts we are enabled to reproduce: one of the white Japanese Anemone, a free use of which—there was only one small clump this autumn—would do something to brighten the dreary wildness of the Embankment Gardens; the other of the Cape Pondweed, which is making itself at home

CAPE PONDWEED (*Aponogeton distachyon*).

in a pond on Hampstead Heath. *Ex duo disce omnes.* If we must criticise, we would hint that the chapter on British wild flowers would be the better for revision by some specialist in British plants; there are statements to which exception might be taken, and so beautiful a book should not have even slight blemishes. But enjoyment rather than criticism is the prevailing feeling when we have the privilege of noticing such a volume as this.

Messrs. Macmillan always provide attractive fare, but they have seldom given us a more charming volume than the new edition of *The Fables of Æsop* (6s.), to which Mr. Joseph Jacobs has provided a preface and notes, for the benefit of those who want something more than the fables themselves, while some hundreds of Mr. Richard Heighway's delightful and original pictures adorn the book. We shall be surprised if one copy is found sufficient for the average nursery; the drawings are bold in style, and abound in humour of the kind that appeals to children, not only of a larger but of a smaller growth, and under such circumstances books do not last long. The same publishers send us Mr. Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* (6s.), which although issued some few months back has by no means exhausted its popularity, and will, if we mistake not, find its way into many homes this Christmas. There we read at length the adventures of the "man's cub," Mowgli, among his "brothers," the wolves; of Rikki-tikki the mongoose, and the great war that he fought single-handed; of "tiger-tiger," and the white seal, and little Toomai of the elephants, who saw "what never man had seen before—the dance of the elephants at night and alone in the heart of the Faro hills"; all these told as Mr. Rudyard Kipling can tell stories, and fully illustrated by his father and other capable draughtsmen. There will be happiness among the young folk who make Mowgli's acquaintance this Christmas.

When we noticed last year (p. 176) Mr. George Milner's *Country Pleasures*, we mentioned the occasional holiday jaunts to Arran and elsewhere which lent variety to that most pleasant book. Now he takes us to Arran once more—not for a passing glimpse, but for as long as his book takes in the reading and lasts in

the memory. *Studies of Nature on the Coast of Arran* (Longmans, 6s. 6d. net) is the kind of book we expect from Mr. Milner—thoughtful, refined, appreciative, sympathetic. We see the scenes he depicts and the people he talks with ; we enjoy his unhackneyed and always appropriate quotations, showing that the study as well as the open has its attractions for the author ; and we thank the artist, Mr. W. Noel Johnson, for the beautiful illustrations which give an additional attraction to pages already attractive.

Perhaps more strictly Selbornian is Dr. C. C. Abbott's *Travels in a Tree-top* (6s.), sent us by Messrs. Elkin Matthews and John Lane before their dissolution of partnership. "I climbed an oak this midsummer morning"—this is how Dr. Abbott set out on his travels—and from his exalted post he watched the crows, who resented his intrusion, and the big black ants, who went to "the very tips of the tiniest twigs," apparently "with aimless feet." As to the crows—are popular rhymes altered in their way across the Atlantic, whence Dr. Abbott hails ? We are accustomed to say of magpies—

"One for sorrow,
Two for mirth,
Three for a wedding,
Four for a birth :"

but in transferring this to crows, our transatlantic friends have considerably altered its phrasing, for Dr. Abbott gives—

"A single crow betokens sorrow,
Two betoken mirth,
Three predict a funeral,
And four a birth."

This is not an improvement on tradition, and "betokens woe" would be better in the first line.

After a little, Dr. Abbott comes down from his exalted post, and sets off up creeks and on Indian trails, goes for a winter night's outing, strolls into an old-fashioned garden, and generally has "a good time ;" coming to an end among the dead leaves. There may be some who will complain that our author is not Mr. John Burroughs, but he is a pleasant companion all the same, who knows what he is talking about, and is able to point out many interesting things to those who will take him as a guide.

A less favourable specimen of the same class of book is Dr. W. C. Gray's *Camp Fire Musings* (Edinburgh, Douglas : 6s.) It is beautifully printed, and illustrated with portraits of the apparently real folk whose adventures are recorded, and as an account of experiences, some of which are novel to us in the Old World, is not without interest. But there is too much fine writing and too little observation ; too much imagination and Americanized Grant-Allenism, and too little fact ; even "the new humour" finds a home in these pretty pages. If Dr. Abbott fall short of Mr. Burroughs, Dr. Gray is by no means up to Dr. Abbott's standard, from a Selbornian standpoint.

Our home guides, Professor Boulger and Mrs. "Owen"—the use of pseudonyms always seems to us unnecessary save as a disguise, and this reason is non-existent when the secret is an open one—come forward to help us for October and November in *The Country Month by Month*, and doubtless by the time this notice is in print will be prepared to lead us by the hand through December. The anticipation of November this year is fortunately worse than the reality. "London is shrouded in fog," says our guide ; but it is not, so far : indeed, some November days this year have contrasted favourably with many in July and August. Chrysanthemums and lichens form the subject of Professor Boulger's talk, while Mrs. Owen, as usual, chats pleasantly about the birds of the month. We are glad to see that Messrs. Bliss Sands and Foster are going to issue these monthly instalments in quarterly volumes. This series is likely to be in demand for some time to come, and in this form will be very convenient. The "Son of the Marshes," who is so often quoted in the little volumes just noticed, is to the fore with another book, of which we shall say more in a later notice. At present we will call the attention of his numerous admirers to *From*

Spring to Fall (Blackwood, 3s. 6d.), which will form a welcome addition to many Selbornian libraries.

Judging from the first part, Messrs. Cassell have made an attractive addition to their long list of serials in *The Story of the Sea*, for which Mr. Quiller Couch, better known as "Q," has been secured as editor. Sixty-four lavishly illustrated pages for 7d., with a large plate thrown in—we often wonder what becomes of these cumbrous bonuses which the publishers lavish upon purchasers of first numbers—cannot be considered dear, and it is safe to predict a large sale for this publication. Messrs. Partridge send us the brightly bound volume in which the yearly numbers of the *Band of Mercy* are brought together. This cannot fail to be a welcome school prize, even in places where the excellent Bands are not established.

Lady Lindsay's poems have always received a welcome in these pages, and her last volume, *The King's Last Vigil* (Kegan Paul, 6s.), contains a great deal of charming and musical verse. Lady Lindsay, like Mrs. Hinkson (Katherine Tynan), whose verses have been quoted more than once in these pages, is a born Selbornian, and it is this quality which makes a notice—too brief for justice—of her poems necessary in NATURE NOTES. Besides a curious variant of the story of St. Francis and the birds, in which the birds do the preaching, we have the legend of St. Dol, of which we give a part, thus allowing the book to speak for itself:—

"One day—it was at hot noontide—
His spade full long St. Dol had plied—
He cast his hooded cape aside.

"He softly laid and spread it where
The white boughs of a blossomed pear,
Like ships' sails, stretched in balmy air.

"Scarce had he done this, when a bird
Among the leaves beside him stirred;
A tiny wren he saw and heard.

"She sought a nest, she sought to find
A sanctuary to please her mind,
A haven from all rude touch shrined.

"Here was a white and holy tree,
A row of lilies fair to see,
A home as sweet as sweet might be.

"And whiter seemed the snow-white hood
Worn by God's saint so pure and good:
This be her nest—let come what would.

"She laid her egg and knew no fear;
The gentle saint who stood so near,
To him were all God's creatures dear.

"He dropt him down on bended knee,
To glorify the Lord that He
Had bid the wren so fearless be.

"The sweet bird sang without a dread,
As from the raiment peeped her head.
Untouched they left her self-sought bed—

"And there, unhurt, she bred her young,
The smiling awe-struck monks among.
The legend flew from tongue to tongue

"Through every nook of Normandy.
And all who could came forth to see
The hooded cape, the fruited tree."

A severe critic might point out that the poems are of unequal merit, and that even Lady Lindsay cannot be allowed to think that "full inch" rhymes to "bullfinch" or "sound well" to "groundsel." But no critic would be slow to acknowledge the many charms of this dainty little book.

SELBORNIANA.

Birds at Bridlington.—The following may interest your readers. While at Bridlington a few weeks ago, I got into conversation with an intelligent young boatman, who informed me that it had ceased to pay them to kill sea-birds, as there was now no market for them, many ladies having given over wearing their wings and plumage, the price formerly obtained being 10s. a score. I regret to say, however, that in Bridlington Bay and all along the beautiful cliffs at Flamborough, a useless slaughter is still kept up by amateur gunners. I have seen on the first Monday in August on the north landing at Flamborough, dozens of dead sea-birds shot and then left on the beach; nor is this the worst, as I was informed that numbers of young unfledged birds would starve to death in the nests in the cliff. The fact that the young ones appear so late in the season may seem strange, but it is accounted for by the fact that the cliffs are leased to egg gatherers during the spring months of the year, thus preventing the birds from raising their young at the usual time, and when at last they are allowed to sit in peace, it is too late for them to get the young away before the shooting commences. Surely this ought to be altered, either the egg gathering should close one month later, or the "close season" should be prolonged until September. B.

Kingfisher and Trout.—In previous numbers of NATURE NOTES the scarcity of kingfishers was mentioned. Is it true that on the Trent these beautiful birds are murdered because of their interference with the trout fisheries?
E. G. W.

The Doom of Snowdon.—Your readers will be much troubled to know that the doom of the monarch of our mountains is to be sealed on December 5, on which date Mr. Assheton Smith, the owner of the land, will be asked to cut the first sod of the Snowdon Railway. On two former occasions this gentleman defeated in Parliament a project for a railway to the top of the mountain; and there can be no doubt that if he now refuse the facilities to others, which he personally will not avail himself of, the vulgarising of a mountain height, which is one of the chief glories of our country, would be impossible. That a mountain famed in song and filled with sacred association, should thus be degraded to the level of a tea garden and switchback combined, at the will of company promoters; and that its super-eminent charm of solitude, its power of inspiration, its restfulness for the people, should be destroyed, is little less than a national disaster. There is only one Snowdon in all the world. But the mischief does not stop here. The example set on Snowdon will be followed on the Scotch, English, and Irish hills. The mountain railway craze, as travellers in Switzerland know well, spreads rapidly. The electric engineer and the hotel speculator are always on the alert, and company promotion seems to be a paying concern. Those who care for the spirit of patriotism which is engendered by beautiful scenery, and who believe that our mountain solitudes are necessary as means of education for the hearts and eyes of the people, who realise how much of the best thought in our literature has been inspired by the genius of the hills, must feel that the time has come for the nation to demand the interference of its legislature. Why should there not be a commissioner or commissioners appointed by Parliament to safeguard the national interest in scenery, and to see that the recreation grounds and the inspiration grounds of the people are not jeopardised by the will or whims of private owners, or the selfishness of speculators?
Crosthwaite Vicarage, Keswick. H. D. RAWNSLEY.

Haywards Heath Recreation Ground (p. 206).—I am sorry to find that Mr. Archibald Clarke has been misled by his correspondent, and I cannot refrain from writing to vindicate the character of our Local Board. The facts are these: a low-lying swampy part of the ground (four acres), which was neither ornamental nor useful, has been filled up and levelled to form a cricket ground, while the whole of the remainder (sixteen acres) is to be left for the furze and heather. The furze has, during many years, accumulated a large quantity of dry rubbish and dead wood under it, which not only mars its beauty, but from its inflammable nature has given rise during the past few years to several devastating fires. We

are, therefore, cutting down the dead and unsightly old furze to assist younger growth, and in addition are cutting circuitous paths here and there through it, which not only will make pleasant walks, but in case of fire will help to isolate the surrounding "clumps." Mr. Clarke's correspondent must have seen the commencement of these operations, and jumped rather hastily to conclusions, and it will doubtless be good news to him (or her), as well as to all lovers of Nature, to know that there is no intention on the part of the Board to do anything to destroy the rural nature of the ground, in fact, any such proposal would be strenuously opposed by every member. In conclusion, I may add that the only portion of the ground which is, or is likely to be, cultivated in any form, is a margin on each side of the central road, and this is only occupied by rhododendrons and forest trees.

Haywards Heath. A. R. PANNETT.

[We find in the misleading information which Mr. Pannett satisfactorily controverts, another illustration of the necessity of caution on the part of Selbornian enthusiasts.—ED. *N.N.*]

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

The Dormouse.—This little creature, which in truth is no mouse at all, but very nearly related to the common squirrel, is one of the prettiest of our British mammals. Its bright eyes, beautiful fur, and long hairy tail, combine to give it a most pleasing appearance. This being the case it is much sought after as a pet; and I know of no animal which is better adapted to a life of captivity. It has little or no smell, its food is easily and inexpensively obtained, and altogether it gives about as little trouble as any pet I could name; not so much even as a canary! The only drawback to a dormouse as a pet is its nocturnal habits. It is seldom seen in the day, for in the early morning it retires to its nest, there to pass the hours of light in profound and unconscious slumber. Anyone seeing a dormouse for the first time, as he appears when taken from its nest in the day time, curled into a little ball of fur, with his hind paws over its ears, or perhaps just awakened and gazing sleepily about, would hardly credit what a jolly little fellow he is, when the shades of evening begin to fall and he comes out to feed! His nest, which is rather larger than a tennis ball, is a wonderful and beautiful structure; usually placed in the bottom of a hedge not far from the ground, it is composed of grass, and generally a few dead leaves interwoven, lined with fine shreds of dead grass. A hole is left in the side by way of a door, and altogether it is a very snug little affair.

The male does not occupy the same nest as the female and young, but has one of his own, usually, I believe, at some little distance. The fur of the male is bright reddish chestnut above and lightish fawn-yellow beneath, with a whitish patch under the chin. The eyes are black and very prominent, and the tail is covered with long hairs, and is slightly tufted at the extremity. The female is generally lighter in colour, and not so red as her mate, also her tail is usually shorter.

The young, which are blind and naked when born, are produced about the month of May. They are usually four in number. The teeth of the dormouse are beautifully adapted for boring the little round holes in the shells of the nuts, through which it extracts the kernel. Nuts and acorns form its chief food. In captivity it may be given a great variety of nuts and fruit, apples being a favourite. It drinks a large quantity of water, and should always have a liberal supply at hand or it will not live long. It is said that the dormouse, when unwell, makes a large, irregular hole in its nuts, instead of the small, round one which it makes when in health. The shells of the nuts should never be cracked for it, as this, though it may ignorantly be thought a kindness, is in reality a very cruel practice, as it takes away from the work of the teeth, which in common with those of other rodents grow at a very rapid rate, and would very soon become so long as entirely to deprive the poor creature of the power to use them, which would of course result in its death. In all cases where the dormouse is kept in captivity, as large a cage as

possible should be provided, with a small retiring box, in which should be placed some wool or dry moss, out of which "Dor" will make a very comfortable nest for himself. A number of perches and sticks should be placed in the cage for the diversion of the little captive, but those tread-mills, or wheels, as they are usually termed, which are so often attached to cages which are offered for sale in shops, should be studiously avoided. These are really cruel contrivances, throwing the poor creatures which are condemned to use them into a terrible state of alarm.

ALFRED H. BASTIN.

Brooks brought in a dormouse's nest, a "sleepmouse," he called it (a more correct combination of names), which, while he was clipping shrubs, he found in a laurel bush a good way from the ground. It looked just like a bird's nest, being small, round, and made of dried grass. There were only two young ones —without any parent—in it, as large as a very small house mouse, fast asleep, but quickly awakened, able to see, and one of them very alert. He put them, nest and all, in a cage, meaning to rear them; one of them crept through the wires and was glad to be kept warm in my hand. Brooks finally decided that they were too young to rear, and to my very great satisfaction put the nest back into the bush. Returning a few minutes after, I found a bustle in the nest, and then perceived that the mother was climbing into the nest with her thick, furry, sandy tail hanging down. Presently she reissued, with a little one in her mouth, but it was rather large for carrying; she let it drop through the bushes to the ground, where she was again seen trying to carry it. I did not see all her next manœuvres, but it ended with her getting them both out of the nest—now reduced to a fragment—and we hope she has hidden them securely amidst the tree stumps and roots of the fernery close by. The last glimpse I had of her was a little after she was on the ground amongst the laurel bushes; but she darted directly up a short chopped stem, and disappeared in the magical way a squirrel does. I go from time to time to the spot, but can see no sign of the new retreat.

Taplow. L. SHORE.

Cats and Squirrels (*N.N.*, 1893, 217; 1894, 198).—It has been asked whether a cat could tackle a squirrel? I should say most certainly "Yes." The domestic cat, especially if running wild as they so often do in the country districts, is a most powerful animal for its size. The following incidents will, perhaps, prove that. An old male cat which once belonged to a relative of mine (one of the old-fashioned type of sportsman, *not* a member of the Selborne Society), attained such a notoriety in the neighbourhood for strength and desperate courage that he was backed to resist the attacks of a vicious fox-terrier for ten minutes. The two were put into a pigstye together, and the battle began. From first to last the terrier was nowhere, and at the end of seven minutes was rescued by his owner, or he would have been killed by the cat. It will readily be understood what a small chance a squirrel would have in the clutches of such an enemy. And again, some two or three years ago I possessed two kestrels, both cock birds, which, although hand-reared from the nest, retained all their native wildness and ferocity, throwing themselves on their backs and fighting desperately with claws and beak on the slightest attempt being made to touch them. I was in the habit of letting them out of their cage for a run occasionally, as they both had a clipped wing, but actually one afternoon, while they were loose in the garden, I had turned my head away for a moment, but hearing a cry just looked up in time to see a neighbour's cat disappearing over the garden wall with one of the hawks in his mouth. I, of course, followed quickly enough to release the bird from his dangerous position before puss had time to kill him, and, strange to say, the bird did not appear to be injured in the slightest. These two instances are quite enough to show what a formidable adversary a cat is to both fur and feather, and I attribute much of the damage done to game to our, at times, innocent-looking friend, the domestic cat. X.

Robins.—It is not uncommon for robins to become friendly in the winter, but this summer we have all been delighted by the wonderful tameness of two young ones. About June 14, three or four quite young birds appeared among the shrubs close to a summer-house and some acacia trees under which we sat every day, sometimes in quite a large party, working and reading. One bolder than the

others came and picked up crumbs which we scattered at our feet at teatime, and very soon I induced him to take crumbs from my hand, and at last from my lips. In a few days he would fly down from the trees directly I arrived at the spot, and expect to be fed always from my mouth, and in time got so brave that he would do so with several other persons close by, if they kept quiet. He had no red in his breast when he first began to come, but in a short time the colour began to show, and sometimes he would sing a few clear notes, and then the sweet "whispered" song, which I am inclined to think only *young* robins sing.

I was grieved when in about a month from the time he had begun his visits, he ceased to care for crumbs, for he began to enjoy large earthworms, which, I suppose, satisfied his hungry young appetite better, but he still hopped about and looked at me, and one day came and sat on a twig, when I was alone, close to me, and sang in a low, confidential tone, as if explaining himself. He had not ceased coming to be fed for a week before another, also without any colour in his breast, and which he had driven away one day, came and behaved in exactly the same friendly way, grew a beautiful red breast—which the young people attributed to the cake he had eaten!—and then departed exactly as the others had done, to my great disappointment.

North Moreton, Wallingford. M. S. Y.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Miss B.—Yes, it is the grey phalarope.

E. V. T.—We can hardly undertake to enter upon so extensive a subject.

B. C. A.—Consult a bird-fancier.

J. L. B.—(1) Yes. (2) Rabenhorst gives these measurements:—Diam. trich. $\frac{1}{352}$ — $\frac{1}{290}$‴ = 0,00025—0,0003″; cellul. perdur. $\frac{1}{200}$ — $\frac{1}{177}$‴ = 0,00045—0,0005″, vag. ad $\frac{1}{87}$‴ = 0,0010″.

C. G.—*Trichocolea tomentella.*

H. H. S.—1. We cannot advise; choose one in which you feel special interest, and we will then recommend books, &c. (2) Yes. (3) Subscriptions begin with the New Year; send 2s. 6d. to publishers.

D. E. M.—Read our first Rule, below.

The Editor has once more to claim the indulgence of numerous contributors whose communications are unavoidably held over, although four extra pages of matter are given in the present issue. The constant succession of interesting papers is extremely gratifying, but at the same time very embarrassing. It would be easy to fill a magazine twice the size, but at present there seems no possibility of increasing our number of pages. We must, therefore, beg our many friends to be patient. Mr. Carruthers's article on "The Vitality of Seeds" will appear in our January number.

We must request those who favour us with their communications to observe the following rules. We cannot undertake to notice the contributions of any who fail to comply with them.

1. All communications for NATURE NOTES to be authenticated with name and address, not necessarily for publication.

2. The return of an unaccepted contribution can only be guaranteed when it is accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

3. All communications for any number must be in the Editor's hands by the 15th of the preceding month.

4. Communications for NATURE NOTES should be addressed to the Editor, JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S., 18, West Square, London, S.E., as should specimens for naming, books for review, &c.

5. Letters connected with the Selborne Society, as well as all enquiries as to the supply of NATURE NOTES, and subscriptions, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Selborne Society, A. J. WESTERN, Esq., 20, Hanover Square, W.

6. The Editor is not responsible for the contents of the last page of each number: communications respecting this page must be addressed to Mr. WESTERN, as above.

SELBORNE SOCIETY NOTICES.

Selborne Library.—The Committee gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a large parcel of new books (some thirty or forty volumes), presented by the Editor, Mr. J. Britten, to the Library.

Leaflet.—The Committee have to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of a very useful leaflet, entitled "The Destruction of Hawks and Owls," intended for distribution among gamekeepers, from the pen of Mr. John Cordeaux, and which the Committee purpose to publish shortly.

Council and Committee Meetings.—The next Meetings of the Council will be held on Tuesdays, December 4 and January 1. The Magazine and Leaflet Committee meet on Wednesdays, December 19 and January 16.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES.

Atalanta.—Mrs. Ramsay Parsons, of 33, Kensington Square, W., has kindly undertaken the Hon. Secretaryship of this Branch in the absence abroad of Miss Parsons.

Barmouth.—The Council approved the Warrant for the formation of a new Branch at Barmouth, North Wales, at their November meeting. The Hon. Secretary, *pro tem.*, is Mr. D. Arthur Hughes, M.R.C.S.

Clapton.—Social Evenings in continuation of the Field Club. The inaugural meeting of the Winter Session was held on November 13, when a very interesting and instructive lecturette on Marine Microscopic Life, illustrated by lantern views, was given by Dr. Gerard Smith. Afterwards light refreshments were served, and the rest of the evening was occupied by vocal and instrumental music, and recitations. A very hearty vote of thanks to the President, Vice-presidents and Hon. Secretary terminated a very enjoyable evening.

Croydon.—A very interesting Lecture was given on November 10 at the Thornton Heath Polytechnic on "Local Stones and Flowers," by Mr. Edward A. Martin, the Hon. Secretary, the especial feature of the lecture being a description of the geology of the immediate neighbourhood. A list of the wild flowers of the district was exhibited, which, considering the proximity of London, was considered very satisfactory.

Hampstead (Northern Heights).—The Members of this Branch recently spent, by invitation, a very enjoyable afternoon at the residence of the Rev. Dan Greatorex, London Docks, E. A large and beautiful collection of curiosities was exhibited, about which the owner gave many interesting particulars in his usual charming manner. On leaving a very cordial vote of thanks was tendered to the host for his hospitality and kindness.

Communications for this page must be received not later than December 15, to appear in January issue.

LIST OF BRANCHES, WITH NAMES OF HONORARY SECRETARIES.

ATALANTA.—Mrs. Ramsay Parsons, 33, Kensington Square, W.

BATH.—Dr. George Norman, 15, Brook Street, Bath.

BARMOUTH.—D. A. Hughes, Esq., M.R.C.S., Barmouth, North Wales.

BIRMINGHAM.—Mrs. Windle, 33, Clarendon Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

BRIGHTON.—Miss E. Bourne, 12, Denmark Terrace, Brighton.

CAMBRIDGE.—F. A. Hort, Esq., Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

CHELTENHAM.—F. W. Butt, Esq., Ivy Dene, Hewlett Road, Cheltenham.

CITY OF LONDON (St. Nicholas Club).—A. L. Dawson, Esq., St. Nicholas Club, Queen Victoria Street, E.C.

CLAPTON.—R. Marshman Wattson, Esq., 14, Narford Road, Upper Clapton.

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NATURE NOTES.

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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"THE FIELD CLUB."

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.

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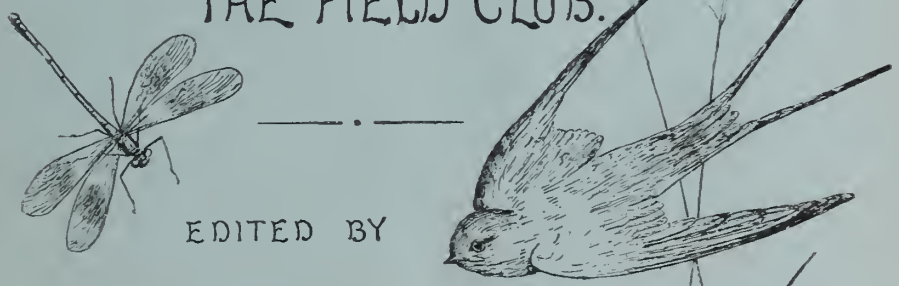

EDITED BY

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NATURE NOTES.

THE MAGAZINE OF THE

Selborne Society.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"THE FIELD CLUB."

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S

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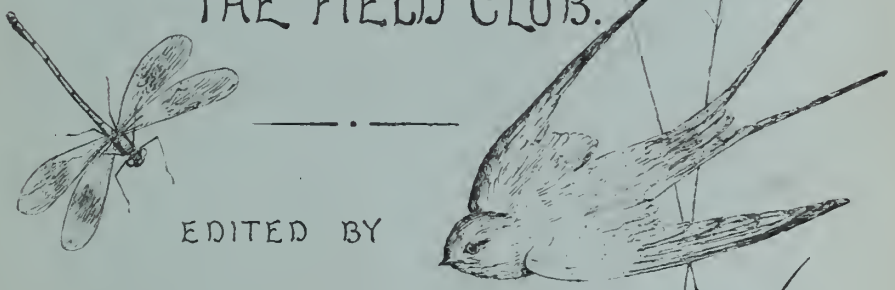

EDITED BY

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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"THE FIELD CLUB."

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.

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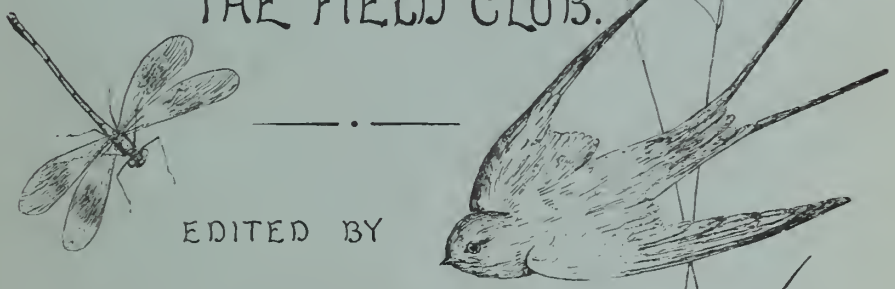

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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"THE FIELD CLUB."

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S

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NATURE NOTES,

THE MAGAZINE OF THE

Selborne Society,

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"THE FIELD CLUB."

EDITED BY

JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S

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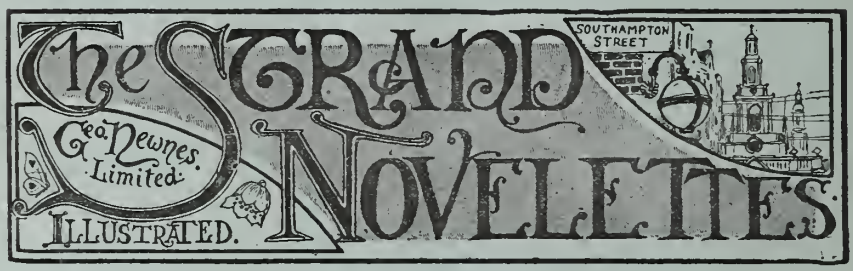

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"THE FIELD CLUB."

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